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LETTERS

FROM

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE;

CONTAINING

A SERIES OF THE MOST INTERESTING EVENTS,

INTERSPERSED WITH

MORAL REFLECTIONS;

CHIEFLY TENDING TO PROVE THAT THE SEEDS OF VIRTUE ARE IMPLANTED IN THE MIND OF EVERY REASONABLE BEING.

BY MR. COLLYER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

FELICIA to CHARLOTTE.

VOLUME THE FIRST.

LETTER I.

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER a long journey that took up four days, I arrived laſt week at my aunt's, where, I ſuppoſe, I am to ſtay a conſiderable time; in which I aſſure you my chief uneaſineſs will conſiſt in being ſeparated from you; and that, you may depend upon it, will be great enough o'conſcience. However, to paſs away ſome of my hours, which I foreſee will lie pretty heavy upon my hands, I will ſend you an account of all that happens worth your notice: but you muſt not be offended, if I tell you I write as much to amuſe myſelf as to pleaſe you; ſince this employment will not only be a recreation to me, but will flatter and ſoothe my friendſhip; and, in ſome meaſure, compenſate for the want of your company. I ſhall always, while I am writing, think I am talking to you; and am even now delighted with the idea of that pleaſing intercourſe of minds we ſhall probably enjoy at this diſtance. How agreeable is the thought, that, as often as you hear from me, you will learn every thing that paſſes in the ſoul of your friend; whilſt I, in return, ſhall meet with the ſame proof of an open undiſguiſed friendſhip from you! For my part, I intend to diſcover all the ſecret folds of my heart, and to unboſom myſelf to you without the leaſt reſerve, as I am perſuaded I ſhall never have any ſecrets which you have not a right to be acquainted with, and which I ſhall not be very ready to communicate. Pray do you follow my example; write with the ſame unreſerved freedom, and never diſguiſe thoſe little affairs in which your heart is concerned; for theſe things, I think, my friendſhip gives me a peculiar right to know.

I am now I don't know how many miles diſtant from dear London, the ſeat of your joys; and muſt not expect for a long time to ſee again the Mall, the play-houſe, or the drawing-room; but I begin to fancy, that in a month or two I ſhall be reconciled to gloomy ſhades, tall trees, murmuring brooks, and all the ſylvan ſcenes which ſurround me; and even ceaſe to regret my diſtance from the genteel diverſions of the gay and polite world; for if plain and ſimple Nature can ever appear agreeable, it muſt be here, where ſhe ſhews herſelf in all her beauties. What a change have I already undergone! I riſe at leaſt three or four hours ſooner than I ever did in my life before, and even go to bed long before midnight. Inſtead of the rattling of coaches, I now hear only the ruſtling of leaves, or the warbling of birds; and, inſtead of rich perfumes, my ſenſes are regaled with the milder fragrance of nature.

Nay, pr'ythee, my dear, don't laugh at me: I am yet neither poet nor lover, nor do I find that I am in the leaſt danger of being either of them. You, I know, cannot perceive any charms in ſuch a rude retreat, fit to engage the attention of a fine lady. Here are no powdered beaux, or gilt equipages, none of the ſplendid allurements with which

ladies of your vivacity are apt to be captivated: but, for my part, a natural tincture of gravity may poſſibly make me more eaſily ſupport the abſence of what your gayer diſpoſition may induce you to conſider as the very eſſence of happineſs.

My aunt, I find, is a lady of plain good ſenſe, and of a moſt free, eaſy, and engaging behaviour; but, as to her perſon, it is far from being agreeable; her face is of an immoderate length; her eyebrows large, and very dark; and her noſe of a more than ordinary ſize: but, notwithſtanding this, ſhe has an air of affability and good-nature ſpread over her countenance, which, at the firſt view, inſpires every one that ſees her with a pleaſing confidence. Her eaſy, condeſcending goodneſs, her ſweetneſs, affability, and complaiſant freedom, diffuſe over the minds of the meaneſt objects ſuch a ſelf-complacency, ſuch an unreſerved frankneſs of heart, as renders it impoſſible for them, in her company, to be ſtiffened by an uneaſy reſtraint. The loweſt being that bears the ſtamp of the human nature is an object of her regard; ſhe puts herſelf upon a level with them in her converſation, and even uſes a language different from her own, in order to ſuit her diſcourſe to their ideas, and to make them underſtand her advice, the conſolation ſhe offers them, and the friendly concern ſhe feels for their happineſs. As to her ſtature, it is ſomething above the ordinary height, though ſhe is a little awry; and, indeed, ſhe has nothing about her that ſpeaks the accompliſhed lady, though every body that ſees her muſt immediately think (I ſhould rather ſay *feel*) her a very good one. In ſhort, ſhe is a woman of great prudence, and a perfect œconomiſt, and therefore her thoughts ſeem equally divided between the management of her own family and a generous care for the welfare of thoſe who apply to her for aſſiſtance. The education of her children makes up a great part of her felicity; it is a delightful employment, which ſhe knows how to render as agreeable to them as to herſelf. The young ladies have been accuſtomed from their infancy to ſhare with her in the delicate pleaſure of communicating happineſs; and have learnt from her, and an Engliſh Seneca, which they have almoſt by heart, the moſt engaging way of doing good. They have a ſmall ſalary at their own diſpoſal; and their good mother tells me, ſhe often feels her heart glow with a ſecret pleaſure at ſeeing them dry up the tears of the diſtreſſed, with that money with which they had intended to purchaſe ſome faſhionable piece of vanity, or ſome ornamental trifle. The old gentleman, my uncle, who died about ſeven years ago, left her with four children, and a large eſtate, but very much incumbered with mortgages, which, by her prudent management, ſhe has lately paid off. And ſhe would now be very happy, had ſhe not a ſon, whoſe brutal extravagance and debaucheries render her extremely anxious for his welfare. This young man is about eighteen, of a robuſt conſtitution, pretty fat, and with a countenance perfectly expreſſive of the dulneſs and ſtupidity of his mind, which has been too rough to be poliſhed by a moſt free and liberal education; but as he is going to make the tour of Europe, I ſhall probably never have occaſion to mention him again. The eldeſt daughter I have not ſeen yet, ſhe being lately married to a gentleman at a conſiderable diſtance from hence. Amelia, her ſiſter, is a lady agreeable in her perſon, and happy in the poſſeſſion of a calm, yet ſedate mind; her paſſions ſeem to be regular, her thoughts juſt, her language unaffected, ſoft, and flowing. After this ſhort character, you cannot wonder, that I no ſooner knew her, than I conceived a friendſhip for her, which I am perſuaded is now become reciprocal. Polly, the youngeſt daughter, is not quite ten years old; ſhe is a lovely creature, of a moſt promiſing genius, and has ſuch an earneſt thirſt after knowledge, that her pretty queſtions frequently give me a very high ſatisfaction.

With theſe two young ladies, and ſome other agreeable companions, I ſpend great part of my time. The ſun is no ſooner riſen, than we take a walk, and taſte the freſhneſs of the morning air in ſome of thoſe rural ſcenes which ſurround our houſe; while the innocent gaiety of my new friends gives an alacrity to my ſpirits, which is greatly heightened by the ſoftneſs of theſe early breezes, and the various ſcenes of natural beauty which every way preſent themſelves to our view.

But it is time to conclude, ſince I have written enough for my firſt letter; and therefore ſhall only add, what your affection

affection will, I am ſure, make you moſt ſolicitous to know; that is, that I am perfectly well, and have no other uneaſineſs than what ariſes from my diſtance from you. I am, dear Charlotte, yours moſt affectionately,

FELICIA.

LETTER II.

THE pleaſure, dear Madam, you expreſs at hearing from me, is ſuch a proof of your affection, that I cannot help taking notice of it. The endearments of a friend have ſomething ſo extremely charming in them, that it is impoſſible we ſhould be inſenſible of their value. If flattery eaſily inſinuates itſelf into our hearts, it is chiefly becauſe it ſoothes our deſire of pleaſing; but how much ſweeter are the careſſes of a perſon on whoſe eſteem we found our happineſs, and whoſe ſatisfaction rebounds back, and gives us who confer it a kind of ſelf-approbation! So much for preface.

Two or three days after I ſent you my letter, my couſin Amelia propoſed our taking an airing in the coach the next morning, as ſoon as it was light, which was accordingly put in practice: but we had not gone far, before the ſtillneſs of the air, and the novelty of the proſpect to me, induced us to walk. A ſandy rock, out of which were cut huge caverns that ſeemed ready to fall, was on our left, and by a delightful contraſt ſet off the ſpacious meadows and fields which, on the right, extended to an inconceivable diſtance, where our ſight was only bounded by a clear ſky, that ſeemed to meet the ground, and in ſome places by hills which could hardly be diſtinguiſhed from the gilded clouds in which they wrapped themſelves. Our eye, at one view, took in abundance of little villages, which ariſing from amidſt the trees at a great diſtance, agreeably diverſified this delightful landſcape*.

Whilſt we walked on, diſcourſing on ſeveral agreeable ſubjects, I obſerved that the ſcene preſently changed, and theſe precipices terminated in a high and ſteep hill, ſo full of tall trees and ſhrubs, that it formed a moſt delightful grove. The graſs here was mixed with beds of violets and primroſes, which diffuſed a charming fragrance through the air. Here we ſat down to refreſh ourſelves on the banks of a ſmall fountain, which with a gentle murmur ran from a cavity under the hill; and, after having drank ſome of the water out of a baſon which was chained to the ſide of it, we ſtruck into a narrow winding path, and began to mount the eminence, to take in a larger view of the vernal beauties of this delightful ſcene; when I obſerved a fine river†, which with ſerpentine meanders added to the beauty of the whole. But while we were liſtening to the different warblings of a number of birds of various kinds, and obſerving the rabbits ſcudding along, and ſkipping at our approach into their burrows, we were interrupted from our contemplations of theſe trifling amuſements, by a voice that at once ſeized and fixed our attention; for we were near enough to hear diſtinctly every word; though, when we looked around us, we could diſcover no human object near. The unknown perſon ſeemed engaged in a contemplation of the harmony of nature; and with a ſoft, yet manly voice, ſpoke the following rhapſody—

'O Nature! how beautiful, how 'lovely, are all thy works! With what 'pleaſure do I gaze around, and view 'the vaſt profuſion of wiſdom and in'finite ſkill that ſurrounds me! Bleſſed 'retreat! where every object leads me 'to explore the bounteous Author of all 'goodneſs, who thus diſtributes his fa'vours to man, and teaches us to con'cur with him in promoting the univer'ſal good. While Heaven, all-com'municative Heaven, thus profuſely 'ſhowers down it's bleſſings, and im'parts to us all that can charm our 'ſenſes, or raviſh our grateful minds 'with innocent delight, ſhall we with 'contracted arts confine our pleaſure to 'the narrow limits of ſelfiſh paſſions, 'and not rather exert our utmoſt abili'ties, in order to diſperſe a flood of joy, 'and render the beauteous, the har'monious ſcene, compleat?—But, ah!

* Leſt this deſcription ſhould be thought romantick, the Editor thinks himſelf obliged to inform the publick, that this and the reſt of the landſcapes are actually ſituated near Nottingham; and that theſe ladies, he ſuppoſes, reſided in a village not far diſtant from that town.

† The river Trent.

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'how ſmall a ſhare can I contribute to 'the great deſign? loſt in a manner 'amidſt the immenſity of nature, like a 'ſingle flower amidſt the numberleſs 'number which enamel this verdant 'carpet, or a ſmall plant in this vernal 'landſcape, too minute ſingly to gain 'the attention, and which could not be 'miſſed out of the blooming ſcene!—But 'why do I complain? Am I not ſuffi-'ciently happy, if, amidſt the works of 'my Creator, I can, like them, by ful-'filling the duties of my narrow ſphere, 'promote the general ſplendor and har-'mony of the whole? If the inanimate 'creation can give ſuch pleaſures to a 'rational mind, how much nobler muſt 'be the ſatisfaction with which ſuperior 'beings view the beauteous order of 'the more noble, the intellectual world, 'when the paſſions and inclinations of 'the mind compoſe an harmonious 'ſcene, infinitely more lovely than the 'fineſt and moſt elegant diſpoſitions of 'matter!'

Here the voice ſtopped. Perhaps we were diſcovered through the trees, and the unknown perſon was diſpleaſed at being interrupted in his private reverie. However, curioſity made us proceed; for I was very deſirous of knowing the ſtranger, whoſe ſentiments and language had prejudiced me very much in his favour.

I do not know, my dear, what you will think of our adventure; but, for my part, I formed a moſt amiable idea of the perſon of this ſtranger, though I had never ſeen him; and his words made ſuch an impreſſion upon my heart, that I believe I have repeated every ſyllable: but the graceful manner, and the muſick of his voice, are what I can never give you the leaſt idea of; for, upon my word, they were quite inexpreſſible.

Amelia endeavoured now to perſuade me to return; but I was too much charmed with what I had heard to conſent to do it immediately. Prompted by a little female curioſity, I reſolved, if poſſible, to ſteal at leaſt one view of this ſtranger, which I did not doubt but I might eaſily do without being perceived. She laughed at my motive; but, however, at my entreaties, conſented to follow me. I then ſtruck into one of the winding paths which lay on the ſide from whence I heard the voice; but had not gone far, when, looking back, I miſſed my companion. This at once alarmed me, and made me very uneaſy, both on her account and my own. I ſtood ſtill—I liſtened. I returned back, ſtopping every moment to look around me; but, juſt as I regained the place from whence I engaged her to accompany me in this fooliſh expedition, I heard a ruſtling of the leaves at a ſmall diſtance, when my heart ſuddenly leaped with joy at the thought of having found again my friend: but was quite miſtaken; for, inſtead of her, a young man appeared from amidſt the boughs. He came to me with an air of reſpect.—But I ſhall forbear giving a deſcription of his perſon till I can give you that of his mind; and that muſt not be till I know him better, which I hope will not be long. However, I muſt tell you, that I believe it was the ſame who had a few minutes before ſo agreeably engaged my attention. He no ſooner came up to me, than he obſerved the diſorder of my countenance, which in a moment was imprinted upon his; when, making me a low bow—'May I preſume to aſk, 'Madam,' ſaid he, with a trembling voice, and a moſt expreſſive look, 'what 'it is that diſcompoſes you? Are you 'alone?'—'Yes, Sir,' returned I; 'I 'have loſt my companion, a young lady, 'who, I imagine, is in equal pain to 'find me.'—'Well, Madam,' replied he, with an ingenuous look, 'might I 'hope that you would put yourſelf un-'der the protection of a ſtranger, I 'would gladly offer my ſervice to wait 'upon you till you rejoin the lady.' Here he glanced his eyes upon me, as if to anticipate my anſwer; but immediately caſt them down to the ground, and, I think, a ſigh eſcaped him.

Though I was under no apprehenſion as to the behaviour of this young gentleman, yet I could not help heſitating a little, to conſider what anſwer I ſhould make him. I was apprehenſive that, ſhould my couſin find me in his company, ſhe might think I avoided her with deſign; and this might poſſibly not only diſguſt her, but give her ſome thoughts to my prejudice: beſides, in the opinion of the world, it might not be thought decent for me to be found ſo early, in ſuch a retired place, with a man whom I had never ſeen before, and to whoſe character I muſt confeſs myſelf an utter ſtranger. But theſe reflections would doubtleſs have given way to my inclinations, had not the young gentleman, perceiving

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Plate I.

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perceiving that I continued ſilent, reſumed—'I ſee, Madam, you are afraid 'of truſting yourſelf with me; I cannot 'blame your caution, and will there'fore leave you, in order to ſeek the 'lady whoſe abſence ſeems to give you 'ſome pain; and ſhall think myſelf very 'happy if my endeavours ſhould reſtore 'your quiet.'—'This is a very obliging 'propoſal, Sir,' returned I; 'and I 'gladly take you at your word: mean'while, I will wait here to learn your 'ſucceſs; but I am aſhamed to give 'you this trouble.'—'I have no other 'trouble, Madam,' returned he, 'than 'in ſeparating myſelf from you. But 'I ought not to complain, ſince it is to 'ſerve you.'

Here he retired; but had not been gone long, before I ſaw him return with precipitation, when he told me that he ſaw a lady walking down the hill; on which I permitted him to conduct me out of the wood, took my leave of him, and preſently rejoined her.

Amelia was too angry with me to forbear reproaching me for the uneaſineſs I had given her, though ſhe expreſſed her reſentment in the moſt obliging terms; but was ſoon pacified, when ſhe found it was done without deſign, and I had been equally troubled on her account: and, indeed, my uneaſineſs had been a ſufficient puniſhment for my indiſcretion. But I have troubled you too long with things of no conſequence; and will only add, that we made haſte to our coach, and were driven home to breakfaſt.

Pray give my reſpects where due; and do me the juſtice to think me, dear Charlotte, the ſincereſt and moſt affectionate of your friends,

FELICIA.

LETTER III.

WELL, well, my dear, you may be as merry as you will with my romantick adventure, as you are pleaſed to call it. I do not wonder at your laughing at me, for I had penetration enough to foreſee it: however, that could not prevent my giving you a faithful account of this extraordinary ramble; for I had rather you ſhould be a little merry at my expence, than I be ſuch a rebel to friendſhip, as to conceal any of my pleaſures or pains from you. But if what I related in my laſt may appear too trifling to deſerve your notice, I do not doubt but I ſhall atone for the trouble I have given you in reading it, by deſcribing ſcenes more intereſting.

The perſon you are pleaſed, in the gaiety of your heart, to call ſome ſylvan deity, who you ſuppoſe inhabits the enchanting groves, the Arcadian ſcenes you ſay I have deſcribed, is a mere earthly being, as very a mortal as you or I; and the native beauties of this rural retreat, notwithſtanding what you are pleaſed to inſinuate to the contrary, are ſo far from being heightened by my deſcription, that, were you with me, you would hardly think I had done them juſtice. But while you are attracted by the charms of your young admirer's dreſs and ſplendid equipage, and dazzled with the glitter of a court, no wonder you think theſe humbler ſcenes, theſe innocent and ſimple charms, which pleaſe me, are almoſt wholly fictitious, and little elſe but the invention of a luxuriant fancy—a ſort of fairy land, that exiſts no where but in my own imagination.

I ſaw the amiable youth I am now to deſcribe to you at church laſt Sunday. The moment I caſt my eyes upon him, I obſerved his fixed upon me; and, to make an ingenuous confeſſion, I felt my heart inſtantly flutter with a very agreeable emotion. I had for ſeveral days longed to ſee him; and could not now help feeling a ſecret joy at finding my wiſhes granted. But I obſerved, at the ſame time, that he was in no danger of appearing ſingular by the regards he caſt upon me; for as I was the gayeſt lady in the whole aſſembly, every body, as ſoon as I aroſe up, inceſſantly gazed at me. When the ſervice was over, I grew impatient to know if he would ſpeak to me: I fancied he would; at leaſt, I wiſhed it. I ſaw him wait at the door—I ſaw it with pleaſure—and went out with my aunt and couſins, filled with a formidable idea of his perfections. But how was I mortified, when, after having addreſſed himſelf to my aunt and her daughters, and paid them ſome civil compliments, he took his leave, only making me a low bow, even without opening his lips to me!

Could any thing, Madam, be more provoking than this behaviour? Not that I was in love with him—at leaſt, I was reſolved not to think I was. But to ſee him ſo inſenſible of my attractions! intolerable!

intolerable! Not to ſay one civil thing to me! what ſtupidity! If I had been ever ſo ugly, he could have done no more! But, however aukward this fit of reſentment may appear in me, eſpecially while I declare that I have my heart in my own poſſeſſion, yet I had really ſome reaſon for it. There is certainly a pleaſure in thinking ourſelves beloved by a man of ſenſe; and if I was not actually in love, I had a very great ambition to make him ſo. He would have been a moſt agreeable conqueſt; and I ſhould doubtleſs have thought his addreſſes a greater honour than thoſe of a thouſand coxcombs.

The next day, however, I had the pleaſure of ſeeing him at my aunt's, and could not help flattering myſelf that I was the cauſe of his viſit. We had juſt dined; and Amelia, having taken up one of the volumes of the Spectator, was reading the affecting ſtory of Incle and Yarico, when he entered the parlour; and, paying us ſome compliments, ſeated himſelf near the door; deſiring, at the ſame time, that he might not interrupt our entertainment. As my couſin had been uſed to treat him with all imaginable freedom, ſhe concluded her ſtory, and we entered upon a converſation on the nature of ingratitude; a ſubject that afforded the young gentleman a happy opportunity of diſcovering the delicacy of his ſentiments. He ſaid a thouſand things equally entertaining and inſtructive, and enlivened his diſcourſe with abundance of tender, generous, and manly thoughts: but at laſt, my aunt being called out of the room, her daughters ſoon followed her. I was now in the moſt deſirable ſituation, and began to prepare myſelf for hearing a converſation infinitely more intereſting. But how great, how inconceivable, was my ſurprize, to find the perſon, who a minute before entertained us with ſuch elegance of thought and expreſſion, inſtantly become ſpeechleſs! After fixing his eyes upon me for ſome time, he aroſe; and, with an air that expreſſed a tender diffidence, changed his ſeat, and ſat near me; but ſtill continued ſilent. His eyes, which had a remarkable languor, and a pleaſing ſoftneſs, were ſtill fixed upon me, but I no ſooner met his glances, than, with a diſordered look, he caſt them to the floor. I endeavoured in vain to reſume the converſation; he replied with ſuch a tender diffidence as would not ſuffer him to proceed: his words faltered on his lips, and were uttered with ſo much confuſion, that it was not difficult to obſerve the ſtruggle he had with his heart, and the pleaſing ſource of his embarraſſment.

Ah, Madam! could I deſire a more agreeable triumph? You, perhaps, had you been in my place, would have laughed heartily at ſeeing him look ſilly; would have ridiculed this ſoftneſs of ſoul; and, with your uſual ſprightlineſs, have diverted yourſelf at beholding a man ſo over-awed by your charms as to give ſuch proofs of his weakneſs before you: and, indeed, can any thing more agreeably flatter our vanity, or give us a higher opinion of our own attractions, than to ſee them make a fool of Good-ſenſe, and ſtrike Eloquence itſelf dumb? But, alas! I found myſelf little diſpoſed to aſſume any ſuch airs of barbarous gaiety. I was not much leſs weak than he, and could not help pitying, as well as blaming, that modeſt diffidence that gave him ſuch pain: but this was a pity that was attended with a moſt exquiſite pleaſure; nor could I, indeed, have felt a greater at ſeeing him at my feet, had he even aſſumed the buſkin, and entertained me with all the lofty and melting language of a hero in tragedy. Not all the paſſionate rants of a lover, who would perſuade me to the folly of believing he was dying at my feet, and that his fate depended upon my ſmiles or frowns, could have given me half the proofs of a ſincere paſſion that I now received.

As I promiſed to give you ſome idea of his perfections, I will endeavour to do it now: his ſilence left me at full liberty to examine his perſon, and I made uſe of this opportunity of doing it with the utmoſt freedom; and therefore, without the leaſt flattery, I ſhall give you his portrait as follows.

You muſt know, then, that he is about twenty; and as to his ſtature, not much taller than I am; which, by the way, is much too ſhort for the hero of a romance, who ought at leaſt to be ſix feet high: his complexion is lively; his eyes blue and ſparkling, and ſo very expreſſive, that they ſeem to diſcover, in the ſtrongeſt manner, all the ſenſations of his heart—a heart that, I believe, would be a great loſer, had it not ſo true an interpreter to render all it's emotions viſible; ſince in his open countenance is

painted

painted an ingenuous honeſty, the moſt lively traces of all that is humane, friendly, and benevolent, mixed with an engaging modeſty and ſimplicity of manners. His hair is of a dark brunette, and hangs in natural curls, which juſt touch his ſhoulders. As to his thoughts, they ſeem bent on the improvement of his mind; and the love of truth and virtue—antiquated perfections!—are ſo deeply impreſſed there, that he ſeems to have very little idea of thoſe fancied charms, thoſe faſhionable accompliſhments, which are neceſſary to form the character of the fine gentleman: nay, the aukward creature does not appear to have the leaſt notion of the art of handling a ſnuff-box with a grace; does not even know how to murder the reputation of thoſe who are abſent, or flatter thoſe that are preſent; and though he ſeems very aſſiduous to pleaſe me, he has not, I can tell you, had the complaiſance to let me know that he thinks I have more charms than his grandmother.

You have now, my dear Charlotte, a right to form what judgment you pleaſe upon the picture I have drawn. The modeſt ruſticity of my ſpark, ſo very different from the confident addreſſes of the town beaux, muſt make him ſeem a very odd ſort of a creature to you, who are ſo uſed to hear yourſelf praiſed in lofty ſtrains, that you will, perhaps, be ſurprized that there ſhould be any other way of touching the heart. But, for my part, however ridiculous his behaviour may appear to you, I cannot help telling you, that I found myſelf exceedingly moved with that tender diffidence and melting confuſion, which, in ſpite of himſelf, diſcovered what I am perſuaded he would very gladly have concealed. His ſilence itſelf, added to the ſeveral tender emotions I obſerved in his countenance, made ſome ſtrange advances in my heart; and, to be ſincere, I do not know what may be the effect of two or three more ſuch tender interviews.

After this frank confeſſion, I know you are more inclined to laugh at me than at him. Do ſo, if you pleaſe; I ſhall find an opportunity of laughing at you in my turn. But to proceed. My aunt at laſt rejoined us, after half an hour's abſence; in which time I had not one gallant thing ſaid to me, not a ſyllable that could tell he was my lover; every declaration of this kind was perfectly involuntary; nor do I know when he will have reſolution enough to unburthen his heart to me. But, however merry you may make yourſelf at this letter, I dare ſay you will be pleaſed with the confidence I repoſe in you, and with the freſh aſſurances I make you of being, dear Madam, your moſt ſincere, and affectionate friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER IV.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

I Do not think there is any occaſion to make an apology for ſending you this ſo ſoon after my laſt, though I have not yet received an anſwer to it. I know you are always glad to hear from me; and therefore, without ceremony, I follow the dictates of my heart, which lead me to communicate every thing to you that I have reaſon to flatter myſelf will be an agreeable amuſement.

A few days ago, my aunt having engaged to ſpend a day or two with an elderly gentleman, who lives at a village a few miles diſtant from our houſe, they made me one of the party; and we accordingly ſet out in the coach. The old gentleman, who expected us, met us with his pipe in his mouth, and, in an agreeable friendly manner, paid us the compliments of his houſe before we arrived at it; and then conducted us home, ſmoaking all the way at the coach-door. As ſoon as we entered his houſe, his unreſerved behaviour rendered his company very diverting. He enlivened the converſation with abundance of merry ſtories, which his homourous and pleaſant manner rendered vaſtly diverting: but the worſt part of our entertainment conſiſted in our being obliged to bear with the impertinence of an old maiden lady, the gentleman's ſiſter, who, out of an affectation of extraordinary piety and prudence, joined to an aukward air of over-ſtrained modeſty, aſſumed an authority that made her perfectly ridiculous. You never, in all your life, I dare ſay, beheld ſo compleat a prude: ſhe would inſinuate that there was a double meaning in the moſt innocent expreſſions; and would frequently ſet us upon ſearching for an indecent thought, where, I dare ſay, none but herſelf ever had any. This was the cenſor of the company, from whom our facetious friend often met with a ſharp reprimand.

'Fie, fie!' would she frequently cry, interrupting him, tossing up her head, and giving him a look of supercilious disdain, 'I protest you make me blush. 'Really you will oblige me to leave the 'room.' But the best of it was, that this gentleman's obscenity was like some people's wit, with this difference only, that as nobody can see that but themselves, so none of the company could find him guilty of a want of decency, but this experienced maid. Besides, her comments were an hundred times worse than the text. She must certainly have a most fruitful invention, as well as a very unchaste cast of mind; or else, I think it hardly possible that she should be so very intelligent in things, which it is the greatest glory of ladies in our circumstances not to understand. Modesty is the distinguishing virtue of our sex; nor can a gentleman violate it in our presence without being guilty of an unpardonable rudeness; but this virtue will never teach us to torture words and syllables to make them speak a sense of which the speaker had not the least idea. This would be to act entirely inconsistent with that love of decency to which we make pretensions.

But to return to our prude. You would have laughed to hear her (while with an air of the most ridiculous affectation she drew up her mouth) express her aversion for the nasty filthy creatures, the men. She is surprized that our sex can be so impudent as to marry. And though she has had the greatest and most advantageous offers, (which, by the way, her small remains of beauty and sense would not tempt one to believe), she could never be prevailed upon so much as to think with patience on the nasty odious things.

Severe as this lady was upon the old gentleman, he was not much behind her in his replies, in which he raillied her so agreeably, that I could almost forgive her impertinence on account of the pleasant remarks it occasioned.

As soon as dinner was over, she began with a severe censure upon the weakness and depravity of human nature, which opened the way for abundance of devout scandal and pious defamation. And as this gave her a happy occasion of mentioning, by way of illustration, the real or imaginary vices of her neighbourhood, she seemed to talk on this subject with an unusual satisfaction. Her immaculate soul triumphed over the crimes of the multitude, and made her look down upon them with a sacred indignation. Every foible was represented in the most glaring light, and a reason given for all the accidents which had happened within her notice. Elated with the most pompous ideas of her own spotless virtue, she pretended to know why one was thrown from his horse, why another was robbed, or another dangerously ill of a fever; and pointed out the respective crimes which were the cause of each disaster; while her misfortunes, on the contrary, were only the trials of an indulgent Providence. What an admirable artifice to extinguish the generous impressions of humanity, and to render the heart insensible to pity! to blot out all the traces of the Deity, and stamp the brute on the reasonable soul! But what, if possible, added to the cruelty and inhumanity of her slanders was, her indirect insinuations, artfully mixed with a pretended air of friendship, which were a greater insult on those she aspersed than her more open invectives. 'Alas!' cried she, with a sigh, 'who would think that my dear 'friend—I won't mention her name; 'my regard for her will not suffer me 'to do that; but she does not live many 'doors from us—I say, who would 'think that so fine a lady, with such a 'modest and artless look, was not as 'perfect in her virtue as she is in the 'symmetry of her person! But I am 'glad she has kept her folly to herself; 'and indeed am too much her friend 'ever to divulge it. I have heard, in-'deed, a little whisper—but no matter 'what they say of her: I hope it only 'proceeds from malice and ill-nature. 'O fie! how can people slander one 'another at this rate! to be sure, it is 'very wicked of them.'

'Yes, doubtless, Madam,' replied the old gentleman, interrupting her with a sneer; 'we know you are very sensi-'ble of the malignity of this crime.' Here he winked at my aunt, shrugged up his shoulders, and she proceeded—'Yes, Heaven knows slander is my aver-'sion,' resumed she, 'and I would not, 'for the world, be guilty of it. What 'if she is not so slender as she used to be; 'she may be troubled with the dropsy, 'you know. I love to put the best con-'struction upon every thing.'

'Slender! Madam,' replied our old friend,

friend, ſmiling with an air of indignation; 'I ſaw that lady yeſterday, and 'upon my word I never beheld a finer 'ſhape, or a more eaſy air; I could 'not help taking particular notice of 'her.'—'How! Sir,' cried ſhe, with a look that expreſſed her diſappointment and confuſion; 'I am perſuaded you 'don't know who I mean.'—'Yes, 'Madam, I do,' returned he; 'and 'between you and I, however you con'ceal names, you are always ſure to 'point your invectives in ſuch a man'ner, that nobody can miſtake the per'ſon they are levelled at. This ſhew 'of friendſhip is only a pretence, a ſpe'cious artifice to wound the deeper. 'Don't you think, ladies,' continued he, turning to us, 'that my ſiſter, with 'her white unſullied virtue, muſt appear 'to great advantage, while ſhe is ſur'rounded by ſuch a black neighbour'hood? How beautiful muſt a ſwan 'look in the midſt of a flock of ravens!'

She was now as red as fire, and was doubtleſs going to make a ſevere reply, when, to my no ſmall ſatisfaction, the converſation was diverted by a gentleman's entering the room, with a young lady of genteel appearance, and a perſon formed to prepoſſeſs every one in her favour. Our good-natured prude ſeemed a little confounded at their preſence; but ſoon recovering herſelf, ran to embrace the lady, with ſuch an appearance of ſincerity, that I began to think her more capable of friendſhip than I had before imagined; but while ſhe was laviſhing upon this ſtranger the moſt ardent careſſes, and with an exceſs of complaiſance, thanking her for her viſit, my aunt told me, that this was the lady ſhe had a minute before ſo cruelly aſperſed under the character of a friend.

All this while I had not taken notice of the gentleman who was brother to this injured lady; but when he was come up to us, I was ſeized with a ſudden flow of joy at ſeeing him the amiable youth I deſcribed to you in my laſt. But you can't imagine what an effect this diſcovery had upon me: the moment I caſt my eyes upon his ſiſter, and conſidered her as a lady vilely ſlandered by the perſon who was now embracing her, I could not, at firſt, forbear taking her part againſt the prude, and being highly offended at her hypocriſy; but now when I conſidered her as the ſiſter of this engaging youth, for whom I felt ſome of the moſt tender ſentiments, I could not help regarding the prude as a monſter, and entering into the injured lady's ſufferings, with a very different kind of indignation. The affront was become much nearer and more ſenſible than it was before. And indeed, nothing but my regard for peace could have prevented my cautioning her, whom I now conſidered as my friend, againſt one who could ſtab with a ſmile, and ſting the perſon ſhe hugged to her boſom. Lucius, for that is the young gentleman's name, ſaluted my aunt and couſins with an air the moſt free and engaging; but when he came to me, methought a timorous confuſion rendered his compliments hardly intelligible. However, he took a chair, when the old ſquire, with his uſual freedom, cried out, at the ſame time taking him by the hand, 'Well, my young phi'loſopher, I am heartily glad to ſee 'you. Here is a lady in company has 'been degrading human nature moſt 'unmercifully; and has even aſſerted 'that we have all a natural propenſity 'to commit the blackeſt crimes. Ods 'my life, if I had been able to have 'managed an argument againſt her on 'ſuch a difficult ſubject, I ſhould have 'thought myſelf obliged to vindicate the 'honour of my own ſpecies; but now 'you are here, you muſt e'en do it for 'me. I am not willing to think myſelf a 'villain, nor would I maintain ſuch an 'ill opinion of my friends; but have you 'reſolution enough, my boy, to vin'dicate your own ſentiments when they 'oppoſe thoſe of the ladies?'

'Yes, Sir,' returned he, ſmiling, 'when their honour is to be ſupported; 'but I hope there are none here that 'have really ſuch unworthy thoughts 'of themſelves and us. For my part,' continued he, with an air perfectly graceful, 'I think there can't be a 'greater reflection on the Author of Na'ture, on his wiſdom and goodneſs, on 'his ſpotleſs purity, than this opinion, 'which at once renders man an object 'of deteſtation and abhorrence, and his 'Creator unworthy the title of the Fa'ther of his rational creation: a title 'which reflects a glory upon our ſpe'cies, and which ſprings from the moſt 'reſplendent as well as endearing at'tribute of the Deity.

'If we impartially ſurvey the firſt 'impreſſions of nature, and the origin

'of our paſſions, we ſhall find that thoſe 'propenſities which are not acquired, 'are on the ſide of virtue. The mind 'of the infant no ſooner begins to 'open and expand, than he feels the 'dawn of reaſon: the bright radiant 'ſtream of heavenly light pours into 'his ſoul, and he ſees at once the natu-'ral deformity of ſome actions, and the 'native charms and intrinſick lovelineſs 'of others. But even before reaſon can 'take place, and while this reſplendent 'ray of the Deity is too glimmering to 'direct him in the paths of truth and 'virtue, he feels within him an internal 'and moral ſenſe, which diſtinguiſhes 'between virtue and vice, beauty and 'deformity, harmony and diſcord. He 'is delighted with ſtriking colours; he 'is charmed with the melting warbling 'of a well-touched inſtrument; he is 'terrified with the braying of an aſs, 'a ſhriek, or a clap of thunder. But 'whence can ariſe theſe various ſen-'ſations of pleaſure, or of pain? 'Whence can ſpring theſe early ideas 'of harmony, proportion, and beauty, 'if they are not founded in the conſti-'tution of nature, if there is not an in-'ternal ſenſe, a natural taſte by which 'they are qualified to diſcern them? 'Virtue is the muſick of the ſoul, the 'harmony of the paſſions; it is the or-'der, the ſymmetry, the interior beauty 'of the mind; the ſource of the trueſt 'pleaſures, the fountain of the ſublim-'eſt and moſt perfect happineſs. But 'let us have recourſe to nature, and ſee 'if this be not the caſe. How early 'does the little creature feel ſentiments 'of gratitude in return for the tender 'care of it's nurſe! How early is it in-'tendered by the ſocial affections of pi-'ty and compaſſion? And how pleaſing-'ly does every natural guſh of ſoft affec-'tion ſwell it's breaſt, and pour from 'it's pretty eyes! But why does it ex-'perience theſe tender feelings of the 'ſoul? For what reaſon does the un-'taught mind ſtart back from ſpectacles 'of violence and horror? Why is it 'moved with pity? Why is it ſhocked 'and wounded? Why does it bleed at 'miſeries in which itſelf has no imme-'diate concern? Is it not becauſe it is 'naturally virtuous, naturally com-'paſſionate and ſympathiſing?'

'What a delightful repreſentation,' cried Amelia, with an expreſſive ſmile, 'have you given us of human nature! 'How very different from thoſe gloomy 'diſcourſes we daily hear of the wretch-'edneſs and deformity of all the race of 'Adam! Too many of our clergy ſeem 'to take a peculiar pleaſure in degrad-'ing mankind, as if they thought there 'was no other way of exalting the De-'ity, than by debaſing his offſpring: 'and this they do by repreſenting us as 'born in guilt, and naturally incapable 'of performing the leaſt action, either 'virtuous in itſelf or acceptable to our 'Maker.'—'It is very true,' replied my aunt; 'but, in my opinion, nothing 'can be more injurious to the cauſe of 'virtue than ſuch falſe repreſentations. 'For my part, as I have carefully at-'tended to the actions and behaviour of 'children, in their moſt early infancy, 'I can ſay from experience, that I have 'never beheld the leaſt traces of this 'natural turpitude, which is the ſubject 'of ſo many pompous harangues; but 'as I cannot be ſuppoſed to have car-'ried my reflections of this kind ſo far 'as Lucius, who, I find, has made this 'ſubject his ſtudy, I ſhall deſire him to 'run through the moſt particular of 'thoſe vices which are ſuppoſed to lurk 'in our hearts, in order to ſhew that 'they have no real exiſtence in the con-'ſtitution of our nature.—But what you 'have ſaid, Sir,' added ſhe, addreſſing herſelf to Lucius, 'brings to my mind 'a circumſtance, which may farther il-'luſtrate your opinion of the moral 'ſenſe, and prove by a familiar in-'ſtance, that it is really founded in na-'ture, and not merely a plauſible re-'preſentation of what we wiſh to be 'true. But, not to keep you any long-'er in ſuſpence: ſome years ago, as I 'was at work in my parlour next the 'hall, I was alarmed at hearing ſome-'body fall down ſtairs; and my daugh-'ter Polly giving a ſhriek at the ſame 'time, I ran in a terrible fright to aſſiſt 'my child. But, with what ſurprize 'was I ſeized, to ſee, inſtead of her, a 'young man whom I had entertained 'the day before lying upon the floor, 'who aroſe the moment I entered the 'hall! The dear little creature, who 'had been the inſtant before at play, 'ſtood ſpeechleſs; ſhe was ſtruck with 'compaſſion; her lips were pale, her 'cheeks were wet with tears, her joints 'trembled. I preſſed her to tell me 'what was the matter, but could ob-'tain no other anſwer than—*The man! 'the man!* In ſhort, her whole ſoul was 'in ſuch an agony, that it was ſome

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'time before I brought her to herſelf. 'This ſtory, I aſſure you, is fact; and 'I would deſire this lady, if ſhe can, to 'account for this tender flow of bene-'volence and compaſſion in a child of 'three years old: an age in which ſhe her-'ſelf muſt allow, that reaſon could have 'no ſhare in the emotions of her heart.'

'Really, Madam,' replied the religious prude, in a peeviſh tone, 'I am 'aſtoniſhed to hear you. I thought you 'had been more orthodox than to aſſert 'ſuch ſtrange opinions. I am ſorry to 'ſee that your fondneſs for your child 'has ſuch an unhappy effect, as to ſhut 'your eyes againſt the truths of our 'religion. I will *warrant* you now 'you don't believe original ſin. Don't 'we ſee every where the perverſeneſs of 'children? But to be ſure you won't 'ſee it—you don't know that they are 'given to lying, pride, and every vice 'they are capable of committing. One 'would think that experience alone 'would be ſufficient to let us ſee that 'they are naturally wicked. Alas!' continued ſhe, with a ridiculous whine, and at the ſame time ſhaking her head, 'theſe are proud thoughts; it is but too 'true, that our nature is ſadly depraved, and that we are naturally inclined 'to all manner of crimes.'

'You muſt permit me, Madam, to 'diſſent from your opinion,' replied the engaging Lucius with a ſmile; 'and I 'think I am able to prove that nature, 'who has ſo early prejudiced the ſoul on 'the ſide of virtue, has not thrown in 'amongſt her favours any of thoſe baleful ingredients you mention. We receive nothing from the hands of the 'Supreme Being that is not like himſelf, 'perfectly good; nothing that he might 'not communicate conſiſtent with his 'infinite benevolence: and therefore all 'I can grant is, that this moral ſenſe, 'like the light of reaſon, is not in every 'one *equally* ſtrong, refined and delicate, though it is in all capable of directing to the purſuit of what is amiable and praiſe-worthy. As to the 'perverſeneſs of children, their lying, 'pride, and whatever elſe you are pleaſed to lay to their charge, they are 'eaſily accounted for. They have not 'only ill examples, but are taught to be 'vicious. Pains are taken to make them 'ſo; and the fond mother, without deſign, acts as if ſhe laboured to eraſe 'out of it's mind the pure impreſſions 'of nature*. But I ſhall leave this 'ſubject, and endeavour to prove, that 'the ſeveral vices laid to our charge 'have not their ſource from nature.

* The judicious Mr. Locke conſiders this ſubject in a very particular manner. 'If we 'look into the common management of children,' ſays he, 'we ſhall have reaſon to 'wonder that there are any footſteps of virtue left in the world. What vice can be named 'which parents do not ſeaſon them with, and drop into them the ſeeds of, as ſoon as 'they are capable to receive them? I don't mean by the examples they give, which is 'encouragement enough; but that which I would take notice of here, is the downright 'teaching them vice. *Give me a blow, and I will beat him*, is a leſſon which moſt children hear every day: this naturally fixes in their minds principles of revenge. They are 'taught to be proud of their cloaths long before they put them on, and to treat with contempt and inſolence all who are not ſo well dreſſed as they; by which they render their 'hearts obdurate, and root out their natural ſentiments of pity. Lying and equivocations 'are put into the mouths of young people, and commended in children, whilſt they are 'for their parents advantage. Their minds are enervated by flattery, and luxury of every 'kind. Is my young maſter a little out of order, the queſtion is, *What will my dear eat? What ſhall I get for thee?* Every body's invention is ſet on work to find out ſomething 'luſcious and delicate enough to prevail over the want of appetite, which nature has wiſely 'ordered in the beginning of diſtempers, to prevent their increaſe.——He had the will 'of his maid before he could ſpeak or go; he had the maſtery of his parents ever ſince he 'could prattle; and why, now he is grown up, and is ſtronger and wiſer than he was then, 'muſt he be reſtrained and curbed?—If his deſires carry him to wine and women, they 'are objects as ſuitable to the longing of one of more years, as what he cried for, when 'little, were to the inclinations of a child.' See *Locke on Education, page* 34—46. But innumerable are the methods of inſtilling vice into the flexible mind of the infant. Their rewards render them incorrigibly obſtinate, their puniſhments make impreſſions never to be eraſed. The *bobgoblin* is ever after a ſubject of terror; and the *poor unhappy wretch*, who was *to take them away when they were naughty*, has fixed deeply a contempt and averſion for objects of miſery and diſtreſs. *The Editor.*

'Avarice,

'Avarice, with all it's black attendants, is confeſſedly a crime of old age, and ſeldom arrives at maturity till accompanied with grey hairs: nor can it have the leaſt foundation in the conſtitution of our frame, ſince it can only be compleated by time, and a conſtant war with ourſelves. Every object of real miſery, every inſtance of virtue in diſtreſs, demands our relief with ſuch a forcible eloquence, that we are obliged to ſtruggle with ourſelves in order to ſuppreſs our riſing compaſſion. The natural feelings of the heart, which on theſe occaſions prompt every man to pity, cannot be eraſed without a degree of ſelf-denial; a violence to reaſon, a violence to all the remains of humanity.

'As to lewdneſs, nature muſt utterly diſclaim it. What man, that has the leaſt remains of generoſity, the leaſt ſenſe of pity, would not ſhudder at the thought of betraying the lovely innocent to guilt, and ſhame, and infamy? What man, that has not loſt all the ſenſe and underſtanding of a man, all the ſoft and noble impreſſions of humanity, and who was one ſtep above a brute, would heſitate for a moment whether he ſhould bridle or indulge an inclination, when the dreadful conſequence lies ſo plainly before him—where miſery, inevitable miſery, muſt attend the partner of his pleaſures?

'But this is not all: we have not only a moral ſenſe, but a paſſion adapted to reſtrain our deſires, and reduce them within proper bounds; a paſſion ſuited to ſoften and reform our minds, by inſpiring the tendereſt, moſt noble and delicate ſentiments.' Here, giving me a look, he coloured, and at the ſame time ſuffered a ſigh to eſcape him; but immediately endeavouring to recover himſelf from his confuſion, which he ſtrove in vain to conceal, he reſumed—'But the force of love almoſt every one has experienced.'—'Ay, ay,' cried the old gentleman, laughing; 'and I don't queſtion but every one here has felt it's power. For my part, when I was a young man, I was a perfect inamorato.'—'Was you ſo?' cried the old maid: 'therefore, becauſe you were ſuch a fool, you muſt think, to be ſure, that I have been ſo too. No, Sir, I aſſure you I was never guilty of that weakneſs.'—'If love, Madam, is a weakneſs,' replied Lucius with ſome warmth, 'it is at leaſt the nobleſt weakneſs we are liable to. Love refines and humanizes the mind, gives a delicacy to our conceptions, and renders us incapable of injuring, even in thought, the dear object of our ſoft affections: and, in fine, is a noble counterpoiſe to thoſe deſires which Providence has wiſely given us, as it is directly calculated to prevent their carrying us beyond the bounds of reaſon and virtue. So the pleaſing ties of friendſhip, mutual affection, and publick-ſpiritedneſs, whoſe charms are almoſt univerſally felt, are an additional guard againſt our degenerating into baſe, mercenary, and ſelfiſh animals.

'But as we have all theſe ſtrong incitements to virtue, it may be aſked, Why there is ſuch a great degree of vice in the world? I anſwer, that it is owing to education; the continual temptation of preſent and ſenſible objects, and the powerful force of example. Theſe ſuſpend the generous and kindly impreſſions of humanity, petrify the tender heart, and make us ſhut our eyes and ears to pity.'

Here our old friend, who for ſome time ſeemed loſt in the pleaſure this converſation had given him, finding Lucius had done, aroſe up in a kind of extaſy, when holding his pipe in his hand, he cried out in a theatrical tone—

"We are by nature virtuous, by nature
"ſoft and humane,
"'Till ſelfiſh paſſions chill our young af-
"fections,
"And freeze the tender heart to icy hard-
"neſs.
"No more diſtreſſed Virtue ſwells our
"breaſts;
"No more we melt at others wants, and feel
"Thoſe foreign cares with painful friendly
"ſmart
"And ſoft compaſſion. The inward ſtruggle
"o'er,
"The conqueſt gained by the dire fury Vice,
"With Meducæan power we're chang'd to
"ſtone,
"To lifeleſs, ſenſeleſs ſtone."——

Here, in the height of his rhapſody, he ſtruck his pipe againſt the table, with a violence that made it fly into twenty pieces. The oddneſs of this whimſical behaviour made us immediately burſt out a laughing, and in a moment diſperſed that thoughtful air that our long

attention

attention to this grave diſcourſe had ſpread over our faces.

I don't know, my dear Charlotte, what idea this converſation will give you of this amiable youth; nor can I tell how you will like his ſentiments; but this I am ſure of, that you are very much obliged to me for being at all this pains in tranſcribing, what perhaps only my eſteem for the ſpeaker made me fancy ſomething curious: though you, perhaps, may think it hardly worth your notice. You imagine now that I have got a very extraordinary memory; but, to be ſincere, I have done little more than tranſcribe what my aunt prevailed upon Lucius to give her afterwards in writing upon the ſubject; which he might eaſily recollect, as he was the chief ſpeaker, and the ſentiments entirely his own.

But all this while I had no opportunity of a moment's ſeparate converſation with this engaging young gentleman: my heart longed to be entertained with a more intereſting ſubject; a ſubject that would have been infinitely more delightful to me than the moſt refined ſpeculations, though accompanied with all the charms of eloquence, all the ſtriking graces which attended his manner of expreſſing himſelf. And I freely confeſs, that I could not help thinking him a little tedious, though my reaſon aſſented to every thing he ſaid. But when he had done, the approbation he received from almoſt all the company, ſo agreeably flattered my eſteem, or, if you inſiſt upon it, I will ſay my *love*, that I never experienced half the delight, when in my vaineſt moments I have liſtened to the flattering praiſes of my admirers. But it is time to conclude this long letter, and therefore I ſhall only add, that I am yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,

HOW inimitably pretty is your way of raillery! I could not read your letter without breaking off at leaſt half a dozen times to laugh at your whimſical conceits. But however, you are never likely to ſee my ſpark in lawn ſleeves, though you ſay there needs little more than for him to mount the roſtrum to obtain them. What a groteſque figure have you drawn of a gaping congregation liſtening to his voice, while the ſoul of muſick dwells upon his tongue, and all the ladies, charmed with his ſtriking accents, ſurrender up their hearts, as I do, to the enchanting force of pleaſing ſounds and graceful action. Was that the caſe, I am of your mind, that amidſt ſuch a number of competitors, I might ſtrive in vain to charm him; and therefore, was there any danger of his entering into holy orders, I ſhould certainly uſe all the influence I have over him to prevent a ſtep that you ſay would be ſo dreadfully fatal to my own repoſe. But, raillery apart, I will now return to my ſtory.

In the evening we left our merry hoſpitable friend, and returned home without Lucius's having an opportunity of ſaying one tender thing to me; but his eyes, however, were leſs reſerved, and methought entertained me with a language that I could eaſily underſtand. 'Ah! how much I love!' cried they, with a ſoft timidity; at leaſt I fancied ſo: whilſt an artleſs, ſparkling glance of mine, in ſpite of myſelf, replied—'How much am I pleaſed that you ſhould 'do ſo!' I know you can't keep your countenance at this mute kind of diſcourſe; but really I am perſuaded that it was very intelligible to us both, though it was ſo precipitate that nobody in the room could take notice of it. Why ſhould we diſguiſe our hearts, and teach our looks a reſerve that we are far from feeling? Theſe little arts ſhould never be uſed to a man of ſenſe and merit; as for the reſt, we ought to have no care about them. Nor indeed need I bluſh to own, that this ſilent intercourſe of ſouls gave me more pleaſure than I ever received from any of my conqueſts. There is ſomething noble in charming a youth of ſuch exalted perfections; and, however inſenſible we may be when attacked by the impertinence of a fop, or a coxcomb, it would prove a want of the moſt laudable ambition not to be elated here, where fine ſenſe, virtue, and an agreeable perſon, are ſo charmingly united.

As ſoon as we were ſeated in the coach, my aunt and couſins began to be very merry with the ridiculous character of the prude; when, at laſt, obſerving that I forebore joining in their converſation, Amelia tapped me haſtily on the ſhoulder —'What is the matter?' cried ſhe, with a pretty innocent giggle, at ſeeing me ſtart;

ſtart; 'one would be almoſt tempted to 'think you in love. Come, rouze your-'ſelf out of this reverie, and let us enjoy 'the benefit of your company. How do 'you like Lucius?'—'Like him!' replied I, with a bluſh; 'why, I don't know; 'pretty well.'—'She is thinking, per-'haps, of her friends in town,' cried my aunt; 'or is it really this gentleman 'that employs your thoughts?' added ſhe, addreſſing herſelf to me. 'Lucius 'is a very deſerving man; and had he 'an eſtate any way equal to his merit, 'I could not wiſh you a greater happi-'neſs than to have him for a huſband.' —'I was not thinking of a huſband, 'Madam,' replied I, with as unconcerned an air as poſſible; 'but has he 'only a ſmall fortune then? Pray what 'is his family? I ſuppoſe you can give 'me a particular account of it?' This was ſpoke with an aching heart oppreſſed with fears; for I could not help being alarmed at the very thought of a diſparity of circumſtances; for though we may have ever ſo little ambition ourſelves, our friends have always a great deal for us, and perhaps are apt to carry it a little too far. They do not think as we do, and are almoſt always blind to merit when unattended with riches: for as they ſincerely wiſh us every bleſſing, they cannot bear to think of our wanting ſo eſſential a one as that on which depends, in a great meaſure, the reputation, the eaſe, the honours of life; the moſt conſpicuous and dazzling advantages.

My aunt, without any heſitation, replied—'My dear, you are in the right; 'I have been perfectly acquainted with 'Lucius's family for many years, and 'am very able to give you their hiſtory. 'His father was born to a ſmall eſtate; 'but what made this a real misfortune 'was, that the very means which reduced his patrimony, gave him diſpoſitions which rendered it the more 'difficult to ſupport himſelf in the narrow bounds that were allotted him. 'He was educated amidſt a round of 'pleaſure, and ſaw nothing but luxury 'and extravagance from his moſt early 'infancy. He imbibed the ſame deſires 'which had almoſt been the ruin of his 'father, and which have ſince had the 'ſame effect with reſpect to his own family. When he was between twenty 'and thirty, he paid his addreſſes to a 'young lady, who, beſides a conſiderable fortune, and much beauty, had 'a ſweetneſs of ſoul which gave a luſtre 'to every other perfection. This was 'ſpread over her countenance, and appeared perfectly conſpicuous in every 'look and every action. In ſhort, he 'ſoon gained her affections, and, with 'the conſent of her friends, married her. 'Poor woman! how much do I pity 'her! He no ſooner got her fortune in 'his own hands, but, in ſpite of his 'good ſenſe, (for this muſt be allowed 'him) he reſumed thoſe expenſive diverſions which he had before been obliged 'to lay aſide for want of the means of 'ſupporting them. The pleaſures of the 'bottle, horſe-races, gaming, have ever 'ſince taken up all his time; while his 'poor lady is treated with a barbarous 'contempt and inſolence; a cruel reward for her generoſity in giving up 'her eſtate to him without reſerve. But 'his ſon and daughter, far from following his example, ſhun the contagion of his vices as they would a peſtilence; and for their ſakes, as well as 'their mother's, I ſhall forbear giving 'a particular account of his debauches 'and irregularities. Alas! how unhappy, how doubly unhappy, muſt ſuch 'a parent be, who meets with the keeneſt reproach even from the virtues of his 'children! How miſerable muſt that man 'be, if he has the leaſt ſenſe of ingenuity, to find himſelf the diſgrace 'of thoſe whom nature hath rendered dear to him! an object of ſhame 'and pity to his own offspring! They 'love the man, though they deteſt his 'vices; and give him their affection, 'though they are conſtrained to withhold from him their eſteem.'—'But, 'dear Madam,' cried I, with the tears ſtanding in my eyes, which the darkneſs of the evening, however, concealed from obſervation, 'how does this admirable 'lady ſupport this complicated diſtreſs? 'Can ſhe have any tenderneſs for ſuch 'a huſband? One would think a conduct like this would undoubtedly extirpate all the ſofter paſſions from her 'breaſt, and leave no room for any thing 'but hatred and contempt. What other 'return can be made to ingratitude and 'cruelty?'

'No, my dear,' replied my aunt, 'you have much too mean an opinion of 'this lady's goodneſs. There are very 'few in her circumſtances, indeed, who 'would not fly out into the greateſt extravagance,

travagances, and keep no measures with a man who behaved with so little regard to the happiness of his family. They would make the house, whenever he was present, an almost perpetual scene of uproar; or, at least, would take all opportunities of publishing his vices and follies. But she, on the contrary, led by the sweetness of her temper, has endeavoured to make him sensible of the baseness of his conduct, by constantly shewing herself worthy of his esteem. She loves him still, in spite of his cruelty; and, I dare say, would think herself very happy if the loss of her estate would recover his heart; even if to obtain this blessing they were reduced to a state of meanness and poverty. She has too much good sense not to see that quarrelling and ill humour, from her, would greatly increase his aversion, and not only widen the breach between them, but be attended with the most unhappy effects with respect to their children; since it would infallibly weaken their natural authority over them, make them divided, and become partners in their unhappy discords; and, especially while they were young, might withdraw their affection from the man she loved more dearly than herself, and who, notwithstanding his ill conduct, had a right to their dutiful obedience. Had this been the case, it is easy to see the fatal consequences that would undoubtedly have followed, not the least of which would have been a want of education, a disregard of all instruction, and their being deprived of those just principles of virtue and honour, which raise the man above the brute, and render him worthy of the character of a rational and social being: for they would probably have disregarded the advice of those whose quarrels gave them perpetual uneasiness. But this amiable lady's prudence is visible in nothing more than in concealing the follies of her husband, which she does with as much care as if they were more immediately her own. She endeavours to hide even his least foibles, not only from her children, but from all the world. And I think I may safely affirm, that no one ever heard her say an unkind or disrespectful word of him.'

'What an admirable character, Madam,' replied I, 'have you given us of this charming lady! How happy would most women find themselves, if *they* were as tender of their husbands reputations! With what pain have I heard a lady, otherwise of good sense, expatiate for an hour together on the little trifling domestick quarrels which have happened between herself and her consort! How frequently do we hear married women dwell with a malicious satisfaction upon those vices, which prudence alone, without the least degree of love, ought to teach them to conceal! For a woman always stands in some degree in the same light with her husband; and she cannot certainly make him appear infamous, without throwing a load of disgrace upon herself; for people will always be ready to imagine, that she herself must be guilty of some imprudence, which she dare not discover, that gave rise to the vices and injuries she so warmly exclaims against.'

'You are much in the right, my dear,' returned my aunt; 'and I am very glad to hear you have such just sentiments, since I hope they will influence your own conduct, if ever you should be in circumstances to require it.'

This conversation, which was drawn out to a considerable length, took up our time till we arrived at my aunt's. But I must not omit one particular, which indeed is too agreeable for me to conceal; which was, that Lucius and his sister had each of them a fortune of five thousand pounds left them by a relation, who died a few months ago.

You see, Madam, with what confidence I lay open the disadvantageous circumstances of a family in whose happiness I interest myself; and can I give you a more convincing proof of the sincerity of my friendship? My father, notwithstanding his natural generosity, and tenderness for me, will never, I am afraid, consent to my entering into an alliance so extremely beneath what my fortune may seem to require. I tremble at the thought of disobliging him; and am resolved, whatever it cost me, to conform myself to his will. However, I may be mistaken. It is possible that a prospect of my happiness may outweigh all consideration of meaner interests and advantages.

Forgive me now, if you can, for troubling you with these melancholy thoughts, which I endeavour in vain to suppress. While this is the case, you

muſt not wonder at my dulneſs, which, in my opinion, is leſs pardonable than impertinence, ſince the one may poſſibly make you ſmile at leaſt, while the other can have no better effect than to give you the vapours, which if you can eſcape after reading this heavy epiſtle, I ſhall not deſpair of ſeeing you in my condition; that is, frequently amuſing yourſelf with a dull walk, amidſt dull trees, dull fields, and talking to your duller ſelf. But Heaven preſerve you from ſuch a change: and may you ever think me, as I really am, in ſpite of love, vapours, and melancholy,

Your ſincere FRIEND.

The moment I had written the firſt letter of that dear expreſſive word *friend*, by which I would always have you underſtand, whenever I make uſe of it, a thouſand nameleſs ideas of affection, ſympathy, and whatever you can imagine elſe moſt agreeable and endearing; I ſay, at the very inſtant as I was concluding my letter, I heard Amelia enter my room; when, turning my head, ſhe told me, with a ſmile, that the amiable Marilla was juſt come to pay us a viſit: then immediately forgetting what I was about, I aroſe with a heart full of joy, threw down my pen, and ran to embrace the ſiſter of my dear——no, that is too fond; agreeable, I ſhould ſay—well, then, of my agreeable Lucius. We had a great deal of chat upon abundance of entertaining topicks; while my deſire of engaging the friendſhip of this lady made me diſcover an unuſual gaiety; or rather, the friendſhip I had already conceived for her threw off all my reſtraint, and made me treat her with the ſame open ſatisfaction as if I had been convinced that ſhe had already entertained the ſame friendſhip for me; ſo that in a little time we grew as intimate as if our acquaintance had been of long ſtanding. No reſerve, no diffidence, no reſtraint, ſubſiſted between us; all our behaviour was frankneſs, vivacity, and the utmoſt extent of ſprightly freedom. You yourſelf, my dear Charlotte, (forgive me ſaying ſo) had you unexpectedly come to ſee me, could hardly have made a greater change in the ſituation of my mind. How ſwift a progreſs does friendſhip make, when a perſon begins with ſuch diſpoſitions! A deſire of being agreeable is the readieſt way of making ourſelves ſo.

My aunt had not only invited this lady to ſee us at our laſt viſit, but hearing me expreſs an extreme deſire of enjoying that ſatisfaction at our return, ſent the next day a letter to her mamma, unknown to me, to deſire her to permit her to ſtay a day or two at our houſe: a favour that I could not help being highly ſenſible of, and from which you may judge of the pains ſhe takes to make my ſtay in the country agreeable to me.

My new companion and I, not contented with engroſſing almoſt all the converſation to ourſelves, reſolved to take a little turn in the fields, to indulge our young friendſhip with diſcourſing on ſome ſubjects not proper for a mixed company; and therefore, finding an opportunity of leaving our companions, we ſlipped into the garden, and from thence went into a retired walk, where we might lay open our hearts without the leaſt reſtraint. A gentle breeze that whiſpered among the trees, the fragrance of the air, and the awful ſilence of the evening, contributed to ſoften my mind, and charm my ſenſes. The

——Twilight grey
Had in her ſolemn livery all things clad:
——*While* the moon,
Riſing in clouded majeſty——
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerleſs light,
And o'er the dark her ſilver mantle threw.
MILTON.

We walked ſlowly on, at firſt diſcourſing upon indifferent ſubjects, till the amiable Marilla mentioned her brother, and told me he deſired her to preſent his humble reſpects to me. This gave me an opportunity of aſking how he did, and happily introduced a converſation more intereſting than can well be conceived. 'I fancy, Miſs,' ſaid I, 'you muſt be very happy in the friendſhip and tenderneſs of this gentleman: he ſeems poſſeſſed of extraordinary merit.'—'Ah, Madam,' returned ſhe, 'I am more happy than can be imagined. He has an extreme affection for me; and there ſubſiſts ſuch a harmony between us, as is very rarely ſeen in ſuch near relations. It is his chief ſtudy to improve my mind; and he has taken inconceivable pains in giving me thoſe juſt principles of virtue, which, I hope, will always influence my conduct. I find in him not only a brother, but a ſincere and affectionate friend. We have but one common

'intereſt.

'intereſt. He truſts me with the ſecrets 'of his heart; and, in ſhort, we are ſo 'cloſely united, that were I unhappy, 'he would feel as much for me as per-'haps I ſhould for myſelf.'—'Well, 'my dear,' replied I, (endeavouring ſtill to diſcover whether ſhe was acquainted with his paſſion) 'I could almoſt envy 'you the pleaſure of enjoying theſe 'dear ſocial delights. I never knew 'what it was to have a brother; 'and, if I had, I might have been a 'ſtranger to your happineſs. There 'are very few ſuch brothers and ſiſters as 'you.' Here I preſſed her hand with much affection, charmed with the engaging idea ſhe had given me of her own felicity. She was ſome minutes before ſhe replied, and perhaps was at a loſs for an anſwer; however, at laſt, recovering herſelf—'Dear Miſs,' ſaid ſhe, 'I aſſure you it is an addition to my 'happineſs, to find that you entertain 'ſuch favourable ſentiments of us. 'Lucius would be tranſported with joy, 'if he could have heard from your lips 'that he has any ſhare in your eſteem. 'It is true, he has ſome merit, a great 'deal more than I can boaſt of, ſince I 'owe great part of mine to him; yet 'you are pleaſed to honour me with 'your friendſhip, while he——' She here appeared pretty much confuſed; and, as if at a loſs how to proceed, ſtopped and ſtood ſilent: but at laſt, ſeeming to recollect herſelf, inſtead of going on, ſhe reſumed—'Had he a fortune equal to 'yours, he would perhaps be better 'able to tell you himſelf thoſe tender 'ſentiments which ſwell his heart.'—'Has Lucius, then,' replied I with an innocent tone, and an air of aſtoniſhment, 'any ſentiments which he is 'afraid to diſcover to me? I can ſcarcely 'believe it, though you yourſelf are 'pleaſed to tell me ſo. However, I 'have ſo juſt an opinion of his virtue 'and fine ſenſe, that I hardly think him 'capable of ſaying any thing diſagree-'able.'—'And may I tell him this?' replied Marilla, in a kind of extaſy. 'Why not?' returned I; 'it would be 'a great misfortune, if we were never 'to be honoured with any company but 'ſuch as were upon a level with us 'with reſpect to fortune. A pride of 'this kind would be the greateſt curſe, 'ſince there are innumerable bleſſings 'in life infinitely more valuable than 'all the advantages that can procure us. 'The charms of a virtuous and upright 'mind are internal; they conſtitute a 'real merit, and reflect a glory upon 'the poſſeſſor; a glory, in compariſon 'of which all other advantages are 'ſuperficial and trifling.'

We were here interrupted by Amelia, who ſaw us go into the garden, and perceiving us at ſome diſtance, came running to rejoin us. With her we preſently returned home: and Marilla leaving us the next day, I have nothing farther to add, than that I am, dear Madam, yours moſt affectionately,

FELICIA.

LETTER VI.

DEAR CHARLOTTE,

NOTWITHSTANDING the friendly congratulations you give me upon the late acquiſition of fortune I received by the death of my uncle, I can aſſure you, with the utmoſt ſincerity, that it gives me little or no pleaſure. This, I believe, will ſurprize you, ſince, as you juſtly obſerve, I cannot be ſuppoſed to grieve for the loſs of a gentleman I have never ſeen, and who conſequently cannot have endeared himſelf to me by any of thoſe proofs of affection we may receive from perſons we frequently converſe with: nor would I have you believe that I am ſuch a perfect Stoick as to be abſolutely inſenſible of the grandeur, the riches, and honours, of life. Theſe, it muſt be confeſſed, have ſeducing charms, and are apt to intoxicate our minds with the moſt pleaſing proſpects of future bliſs: they naturally ſwell the imagination with high-wrought ſcenes of delight; nor can one of my age receive them without feeling ſome engaging ideas of that homage, that reſpectful awe, which ſo agreeably flatters our vanity. That darling foible of youth, Gold, whoſe ſovereign charms are univerſally felt, attracts every heart; all are delighted with the advantages it procures. The grave philoſopher too often ſacrifices at this ſhrine; and the more devout prieſt, who with ſuch eloquence harangues on Sundays upon the contempt of riches, and with ſuch force of expreſſion, exhorts us to contemn the tranſitory enjoyments of life, thoſe vanities, thoſe baubles, thoſe unſatisfying and peſtilential goods, in ſpite of all his opprobrious epithets, is ſtill captivated

by this magick; and, perhaps, there are few among them that would look with ſuch inſenſibility on the acquiſition of ten thouſand pounds as I do.

After this long preamble, you poſſibly begin to wonder what I would be at; and are ready perhaps to imagine that I am either very vain, or elſe that, pleaſed too much with the ſolitude of a country-life, I am become a ſort of female hermit. But neither of theſe is the caſe.

I have not yet excluded all thoughts of making a gay appearance in life; nor do I find any charms in ſuch a retirement as would deprive me of an opportunity of being ſerviceable to my fellow-creatures, and enjoying thoſe ſocial pleaſures, which are ſome of the greateſt ſweeteners of life. But to be ſincere; this long piece of ſlander, which may at firſt ſight appear ſo injurious to the honour of philoſophers and prieſts, (I beg the clergy's pardon, prieſts and philoſophers I ſhould ſay, ſince the ſacred character of the gown-men demands that I ſhould give them the preference) this piece of ſlander, I ſay, was only introduced to raiſe your curioſity.

Ah! my Lucius, can I taſte the ſweets of a fortune, which will doubtleſs be a bar to my happineſs, and render it impoſſible for me to be thine! This is a reflection which damps all my joy. Alas! how weak is ambition, when compared to love!

The day after Marilla left me, I had the pleaſure of ſeeing her brother. He had an air of unuſual ſatisfaction in his look; and perhaps encouraged by the repetition ſhe had doubtleſs made him of that converſation I related in my laſt, in which I ſo freely confeſſed my regard for him, he ſpoke, methought, with leſs diffidence; his behaviour was more polite; his manner leſs conſtrained; while a thouſand tender nameleſs graces, which I had never diſcovered before, rendered him ſtill dearer to my heart. I now felt myſelf inſenſibly awed by his preſence; and in proportion as he became more unconſtrained, I grew more thoughtful. I would gladly have reſumed my uſual gaiety, but it was impoſſible; the company of my aunt and couſins become burthenſome, and I began to fear their diſcovering in my eyes that flow of tender friendſhip, that dear tranſporting extaſy, which ſwelled my breaſt. To recover myſelf from this ſweet diſorder, I haſtily aroſe, and retired into the garden, where I gave a looſe to reflection without fear of being obſerved. I then began to revolve in my mind the danger of indulging a paſſion which would probably prove fatal to my repoſe, ſince I could not have the leaſt proſpect of it's ever being countenanced by my father's approbation. I therefore blamed myſelf; and, after a long debate, reſolved to uſe all my endeavours to conquer my growing weakneſs: but I had hardly formed this reſolution when I ſaw Lucius enter the garden. I was then ſitting in an arbour covered with woodbines, whoſe flowers embalmed the whiſpering breezes with a pleaſing fragrance. He ſaw me, and immediately approaching with an air of reſpect, aſked me if his company would not be a diſagreeable interrupting of my ſolitude? I replied, that as my thoughts were only engaged on trifles, it would be no pain to me to place them upon more agreeable ſubjects. 'But why, 'Sir,' added I, ſmiling, 'have you left 'the ladies?'—'I am obliged to return 'home, ſaid he; 'and your aunt having this minute received a letter, I 'took the opportunity, while ſhe was 'reading it, of coming to take leave of 'you.'

I had now entirely forgotten the reſolution I had juſt taken to arm my heart with inſenſibility; and filled with a ſoft and pleaſing ſurprize at the unexpected company of my lover, even a letter from London could not awaken the leaſt curioſity, though I did not doubt it's coming from my father. Lucius now ſat down by me upon a bank of camomile which almoſt ſurrounded the arbour, when I expected every moment to hear him enter upon the moſt delightful ſubject, love; but though he was more aſſured than ever I had ſeen him, the reſtraints of a modeſt diffidence ſtill tied his tongue, and made him for ſome time preſerve a ſilence which I did not care to interrupt. He opened his lips ſeveral times, but, quivering with fear, they inſtantly cloſed without uttering a ſyllable; but at laſt ſeeming to collect all his fortitude—'Forgive me, Miſs,' ſaid he, giving me a look inexpreſſibly tender; 'forgive a behaviour, which 'doubtleſs makes me appear extremely 'ridiculous; but it is impoſſible to——' Here he caſt down his eyes, with a ſigh, while a flood of ſoft and melting ideas ſeemed to choak up his voice; but at length,

length, finding I waited to hear him conclude, he lifted up his head, when I ſaw his face covered with a deep bluſh, while every feature was expreſſive of the moſt violent emotions. 'How impoſſible 'is it, dear Madam,' reſumed he, with a faultering voice, 'to give utterance to 'a paſſion too tender to be deſcribed— 'and too—too preſumptuous to be for-'given,' added he, with a look and tone that ſpoke the deepeſt deſpair.

During this ſpeech, which, ſhort as it was, took up a conſiderable time, methought I felt all the throbbings of his heart. I ſeemed conſcious of all that dread, that love, and all thoſe terrible apprehenſions, which bewildered his thoughts in a maze of confuſion, and made him tremble at a diſcovery which, though he reſolved to make, he dreaded the effects it might produce. But notwithſtanding this ſympathetick penetration, and all the diſturbance it had a natural tendency to create, the very cauſe of my pain was the ſource of the tendereſt and moſt exquiſite pleaſure, the ſofteſt and moſt ſoothing delight. As ſoon as he concluded, he waited for my reply in a kind of agonizing ſuſpence; but though I was a moment at a loſs how to return an anſwer, I ſuffered my eyes to expreſs a pity and compaſſion capable of diſperſing his moſt alarming fears, had he dared to have lifted up his to obſerve them. But when I ſpoke, a glance immediately met mine, which inſtantly brightening, ſeemed to diſcover my meaning before I could give it utterance. 'I aſſure you, Sir,' ſaid I in a mild tone, 'that I am not at all 'diſpoſed to increaſe your confuſion by 'ridiculing the painful diſorder which 'has accompanied this too tender de-'claration. I am ſenſible of your merit, 'and don't think you capable of an at-'tempt to deceive me. Believe me, Sir, 'I look upon you as my friend, and 'therefore entreat you to reflect a little 'upon the obſtacles that will inevitably 'oppoſe your wiſhes. However, I 'freely confeſs, if that will give you 'any ſatisfaction, that were I at my 'own diſpoſal, you would perhaps have 'no reaſon to complain of my ſeverity.'

You cannot conceive, my dear Charlotte, what a ſudden change this obliging reply made upon the countenance and behaviour of my lover. You are now ready to imagine that I ſhall deſcribe him throwing himſelf at my feet, while with a flow of rapture he admires my ſuperlative goodneſs, blending his praiſes with two or three hundred adorables, tranſcendent excellencies, infinite perfections, incomparable creatures, and abundance of other fine things of the ſame ſtrain. But if theſe are your thoughts, you are extremely miſtaken; for I did not hear him utter the leaſt ſyllable of this ſublime nonſenſe. He is too good a Chriſtian to deify his miſtreſs, and has too good an opinion of me to think I ſhould be pleaſed with ſuch ſenſeleſs homage. In ſhort, in ſpite of his humility, his love was incapable of blinding him ſo far as to make him forget that I was a very woman ſtill, a being of the ſame ſpecies with himſelf; and therefore he neither debaſed himſelf, nor attempted to pleaſe me with flattering praiſes.

After all, I am terribly afraid that I ſhall be unable to give you any tolerable idea of the concluſion of this affecting ſcene. The dreadful agitations, which were before ſo viſible in every feature of his face, were now inſtantly changed to thoſe of joy; a thick cloud, that covered his eyes, in a moment diſperſed; they ſparkled with unuſual brightneſs; while gratitude and love, ſurprize and extaſy, appeared in ſwift ſucceſſion on his countenance, and painted there all the emotions of his heart. As deſpair had before kept him ſilent, the contrary paſſion had now the ſame effect; but, as ſoon as he recovered his voice, giving me a look of tender ſurprize and delight—'O my 'Felicia!' cried he, in a moſt moving tone; and then, after a pauſe of half a minute—'O my dear Felicia, have I 'not offended you? Am I ſo happy, 'ſo exquiſitely happy, as to have ob-'tained your eſteem?'—'Yes, Sir,' returned I, with an affected ſprightlineſs, and endeavouring at the ſame time to conceal the tenderneſs of my looks by holding down my head, 'I have a very 'great eſteem for you, but not a greater 'than I am perſuaded you will always 'deſerve. But come,' added I with a ſigh, which for my life I could not conceal, 'let us go to my aunt; this 'converſation grows too tender.'

Here I aroſe without waiting for an anſwer, while he followed me, at the ſame time begging my pardon, and ſaying he had forgot to tell me, that my aunt, ſeeing him go into the garden, deſired him to let me know that ſhe had

ſomething

ſomething to ſay to me, which ſhe fancied would not be diſagreeable. This news put me in mind of the letter he had mentioned; and therefore fearing ſhe might think me long, and perhaps form ſome ſuſpicion at ſeeing us together, I deſired him to make haſte before, and tell her I was coming: but I had no ſooner made this requeſt, than I ſtumbled at the handle of a roller which reached to the border of the path; when ſeizing my hand to help me, (though I was in no danger of a fall) he ſqueezed it with an air of tenderneſs; and, without ſeeming to know what he did, ſuddenly preſſed it to his boſom, giving me a look at the ſame time ſo inexpreſſibly ſoft and moving, that I could not help being extremely affected by it: and indeed my cheeks were immediately covered with a bluſh; nor could I forbear giving a ſigh, though I endeavoured all along to conceal theſe proofs of my ſenſibility. But, the moment he took my hand from his breaſt, confounded at this ſudden impulſe of paſſion, which I believe would not permit him to think of what he did, he gave me a look which ſeemed to aſk forgiveneſs, and, trembling, held my fingers with a fearful, eaſy timidity; but finding I ſeemed not to obſerve him, and that I diſcovered no marks of reſentment, joy again appeared in his looks, and he conducted me in the ſame manner to the houſe, with an air of extaſy and delight. Nor, indeed, was I leſs happy than he: I eaſily comprehended the ſource of every pleaſing impulſe; and could with the ſame ſatisfaction have preſſed his hand too, had not the laws of prudence and modeſt reſerve forbid it.

It is well the prude I mentioned to you in one of my former letters is not to ſee this, for theſe laſt lines would have made her loſe all her patience: but ſurely it can be no crime to act from nature, when virtue is our rule; and I am ſure it is none frankly to confeſs the innocent tranſports of our hearts to a friend. But if theſe natural ſenſations were indeed criminal, they ſoon ſuffered a ſhock that gave me no little pain.

We entered the houſe with our minds filled with all the ſoothing ideas that could flow from a concourſe of the moſt delightful thoughts, when he let go my hand, and walked in before me; but my aunt no ſooner ſaw me, than ſhe cried out, with an air that diſcovered her own ſatisfaction, and, at the ſame time, let me ſee that ſhe was pleaſed at thinking it in her power to contribute to mine—'Come, my dear,' ſaid ſhe, 'I wiſh 'you joy.' Here Amelia and Polly paid me the ſame compliment, and, at the ſame inſtant, came running, in a friendly tranſport, to embrace me; when, at laſt, putting an end to their careſſes, filled with an eager curioſity—'Why do 'you wiſh me joy, Madam?' cried I to my aunt; 'pray explain yourſelf; 'have you a letter from London?'—'Yes, child,' returned ſhe, in an extaſy; 'and your father tells me, that 'your uncle in the Eaſt-Indies has left 'you no leſs a ſum than ten thouſand 'pounds. How!' added ſhe, 'are you 'not pleaſed with the news! Are there 'no charms in being a rich heireſs! 'What an extravagant fortune are you 'like to have!' I now put on a forced ſmile, to prevent my giving her the mortification of ſeeing how coldly I received what ſhe with reaſon imagined ſuch a ſubject of joy. And indeed, I could not have behaved otherwiſe without betraying the deareſt ſecrets of my heart. At the mention of ten thouſand pounds, I had been unable to diſguiſe that thoughtfulneſs which was ſuddenly ſpread over my face—a painful thoughtfulneſs, that was cauſed by the reflection, had it but been Lucius that he had beſtowed it upon, O then I might have had a better proſpect of being happy! Can I receive any ſatisfaction from a circumſtance that widens ſtill farther the diſtance between him and me? Here caſting my eyes upon him, I found ſtill greater reaſon to be filled with diſlike at this painful, ſplendid acquiſition. He ſtood with his face towards me, leaning upon the back of a chair; his eyes were caſt down with a dejected confuſion; then lifting them up to the cieling with an air of deſpair, I perceived his face pale, a tear rolling down his cheeks, which he endeavoured to conceal, by haſtily pulling out his handkerchief, and walking to the door; when, having ſtaid there a minute to recover himſelf, he ſuddenly took leave to return home.

What various, what ſtrong, what cruel emotions was I now obliged to conceal! But this was not all, I was conſtrained to aſſume a gay appearance. Torturing deceit! I never felt a more painful ſituation, nor ever ſure was an innocent diſguiſe accompanied with ſuch

cruel

cruel anguiſh. I made theſe obſervations on Lucius's behaviour, while I ſeemed to be reading the letter which my aunt had given me; and though I began it again as ſoon as he left us, I read it over without knowing a word it contained, except my being aſſured that what my aunt had told was but too true.

You now ſee, my dear, what reaſon I have to be diſſatisfied with what you have eſteemed a ſubject of joy. Vain are all the proſpects of advantage we fondly flatter ourſelves with from the acquiſition of wealth, the alluring proſpects of gay magnificence, the ſplendid appearances of oſtentatious grandeur, while a thouſand thwarting and controuling accidents can damp our higheſt and moſt raiſed expectations, and change the very objects of our delight into the moſt painful diſquiets, the bittereſt ſources of diſcontent and trouble. But I find I am running on in a reflection, which, if I was to indulge it, might carry me to a tedious length; I ſhall therefore break off in time, and conclude with deſiring you, Madam, to form an idea, if you can, of that affection with which I ſubſcribe myſelf, your ſincereſt friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER VII.

DEAR MADAM,

THE intereſt you take in the unhappy ſituation of Lucius's affairs, and your obliging concern for the oppoſition you fear my father will make to my happineſs, are ſuch endearing proofs of your friendſhip, that I could not read your laſt letter without feeling my breaſt glow with the moſt charming mixture of delight and affection: and indeed what higher ſatisfaction can we feel than that which naturally ſprings from the approbation of a friend, in an affair ſo tender, and ſo peculiarly intereſting as that on which we fancy all our happineſs is founded! The very paſſion you approve, is obliged to return the obligation; and it does ſo in the moſt effectual manner, by transferring ſome of it's tender feelings to the perſon who thus ſympathizes in it's deareſt ſenſations.

In ſpite of the improbability of my father's ever being brought to approve our mutual affection, I could not think of loſing Lucius, and baniſhing all thoughts of our future felicity, without a very painful affliction. I was willing to ſee him ſtill, though I ought rather to have avoided his ſight as much as poſſible, ſince his company could be of no other ſervice, than to ſtrengthen a paſſion too deeply rooted in my heart. The admonitions of reaſon were of little effect; I was not diſpoſed to liſten to them: a more prevailing impulſe made me long to ſee him; and not hearing from him for four tedious days, I wiſhed with the greateſt ardour for an opportunity of letting him know, that the new addition to my fortune had not made me leſs worthy of his eſteem. This I fancied I ought to do in juſtice to myſelf, and formed abundance of plauſible reaſons, which made it appear abſolutely neceſſary that I ſhould thus ſet my own character in a true light. 'After the hopes I have already given 'him,' ſaid I to myſelf, 'can I ſuffer 'him to continue in an error ſo injurious 'to my tenderneſs, and even to my re'putation too, as to think me of a ſoul 'ſo ſordid, as to be puffed up with the 'advantages of ſuperior wealth; to 'think I can retract the encouragement 'I have given him, and to believe that, 'elated with pride, I can now regard 'him with an air of ſuperiority and con'tempt? No, I can't bear that my dear 'Lucius ſhould entertain an opinion of 'me which I ſo little deſerve; he ſhall 'know that, if we muſt be ſeparated, it 'is not my choice, but a cruel force, 'that renders it neceſſary. He ſhall 'know that I am ſtill the ſame, that I 'am ſtill as ſenſible of his merit as ever; 'and that, were I at my own diſpoſal, 'not all the riches of the univerſe could 'bribe me to entertain a thought fatal 'to his peace and happineſs. But how,' ſaid I, recollecting myſelf, 'ſhall I have 'an opportunity of undeceiving him? 'Does he not deprive me of the power 'of doing myſelf juſtice? His fears pre'vent my giving him the ſatisfaction of 'making him thoſe aſſurances, which, 'if I may judge of his tenderneſs by 'my own, would be highly agreeable 'to him. What then ſhall I do? Shall 'I write? No, I can never conſent to 'that; it would be too forward, and 'diſcover too great a fondneſs, for me 'to make the firſt advances. Suppoſe 'I write to Marilla, and let her know 'the ſtruggle of contending paſſions, 'which fill my mind with ſuch a mul-

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'titude of various ſolicitudes, and ten-
'der perplexities. Would not that be
'the ſame as writing to him, ſince ſhe
'would doubtleſs ſhew him her letter?
'But ſuppoſe I deſire her to keep it a
'ſecret, what then will he be the better
'for it? he will ſtill be as ignorant of
'my thoughts as ever. Well, then, it will
'be to no purpoſe to write at all.' Here
I fixed, and reſolved to leave him ig-
norant of all that I deſired he ſhould
know, till a favourable opportunity
offered, that would permit me to diſ-
cover my ſentiments in a leſs excep-
tionable manner; and I did not doubt
but my aunt's friendſhip for him
would ſoon lay before me an occaſion
of doing it, ſince ſhe was too much
pleaſed with his company and Maril-
la's, to diſpenſe with their frequently
giving her the ſatisfaction of enjoy-
ing their converſation.

Theſe reflections I made in my cham-
ber; when having at laſt reſolved to arm
myſelf with patience, I went down, and
converſed with Amelia for ſome minutes;
but finding a tender melancholy grew
upon my ſpirits, I ſought for an op-
portunity of indulging it. And indeed,
when we are in this diſpoſition, the com-
pany of the moſt agreeable friends be-
comes burthenſome: I therefore gave
her the ſlip, and retired into the fields, to
indulge at large the ſoothing ſoftneſs of
my own ideas.

You ſmile, my dear Charlotte, at ſee-
ing me become ſuch an unſociable crea-
ture, as to prefer my own company to
that of a friend. What a ſtrange thing
is love! But though I am grown infinitely
fond of talking to myſelf, and walking
under the ſhady covert of oaks and elms,
yet I am not ſo perfect a lover as to hold
a diſcourſe with theſe inanimate beings;
nor have I ever had the leaſt inclination
to carve the name of Lucius upon their
barks. I am not yet arrived to that de-
gree of madneſs; nor indeed have I ob-
ſerved, in any of my rambles, any ſuch
laſting marks of my lover's extrava-
gance.

I had not long enjoyed my retirement,
when I ſaw a man croſſing the neigh-
bouring fields with precipitation; he at
laſt came up to me, and with abun-
dance of aukward ſcrapes, after having
aſked my name, gave me a letter, and
immediately retired. As ſoon as he was
gone, I caſt my eyes around, to ſee if
any body obſerved me; and, full of a
curioſity which would not ſuffer me to
ſtay till I got to my chamber, ſeated
myſelf upon a bank of turf at the foot
of a ſhady tree which ſufficiently con-
cealed me, when haſtily breaking open
the letter, I had the ſatisfaction of ſee-
ing that it came from my dear Lucius.
How tender and generous were his ſenti-
ments! how affectionate!—But the con-
fidence which ſubſiſts between us, gives
you a right to ſee the letter itſelf. I will
therefore tranſcribe it; and I am ſure, if
you have the leaſt idea of my affection
for this amiable youth, you will not be
ſurprized, if I declare that I was charmed
with it. But, without any farther pre-
amble, I found it as follows—

'MADAM,

'IT is with the utmoſt confuſion that
'I reflect upon your being a wit-
'neſs of the diſorder I diſcovered at your
'aunt's, at what ought rather to be a
'ſubject of joy. My hand trembles
'while I attempt to apologize for my
'behaviour. What words can I make
'uſe of to diſcover the ſincerity, the
'ardour, the tender delicacy of my
'paſſion, when I have given you ſuch
'reaſon to believe that it is the baſeſt,
'the moſt mean, and ſelfiſh? when I
'have given you ſuch cauſe to think,
'that I have loſt in myſelf, in the mean
'conſideration of my own happineſs,
'the tender regard which I ought to
'have for yours? But, O conſider the
'towering hopes to which you had raiſ-
'ed me! Conſider the charming, the
'extatick flood of joy, which in a full
'tide of tranſporting rapture raiſed me
'above myſelf, and ſeemed to promiſe a
'felicity vaſtly beyond what my vaineſt
'thoughts could have aſpired to! Think
'but of the delight that muſt ſwell my
'heart, at being raiſed from the moſt
'gloomy deſpair of timorous love, to
'the unexpected extaſy of ſeeing my
'fears vaniſh; of experiencing all the
'rapturous ſweets of the moſt charming
'paſſion; all the joy that could flow
'from the moſt exquiſite goodneſs, the
'moſt endearing condeſcenſion: and
'then, if it be poſſible, do but think of
'what I muſt feel, at finding, in one
'moment, my high-wrought felicity
'overturned, and myſelf thrown down
'from the eminence of my aſpiring
'joys!

'Forgive, dear Madam, my endea-
'vouring thus to extenuate a behaviour,

'which

'which has diſcovered too great a re-
'gard for my happineſs, too little for
'yours. If it has appeared ungenerous
'and mercenary, nothing but ſurprize
'can excuſe it, and nothing but ſur-
'prize could make me in this caſe guilty
'of a conduct that makes it neceſſary
'for me to beg pardon. I have now
'conquered myſelf, and ſincerely con-
'gratulate you with the reſt of your
'friends; while, with a heart overflowing
'with your felicity, I forget my own
'miſeries. But why do I mention
'miſery? I ſhall have none while you are
'bleſſed: your happineſs ſhall be mine
'too. All my ſatisfaction and delight
'ſhall ſpring from the pleaſing contem-
'plation of yours. What a delightful
'ſource of the nobleſt joy! I loſe the
'too preſumptuous title of your lover
'in that of your friend; and may I in
'that character have the ſweet, the dear
'ſatisfaction, of ſeeing you as laſtingly
'happy as my fondeſt wiſhes would
'make you! May your virtue, with
'all thoſe numberleſs, thoſe nameleſs
'graces, which make even that and re-
'ligion appear with diviner charms,
'give you all thoſe pure and noble de-
'lights, which it is not in the power
'of wealth to beſtow! and may both to-
'gether render you the happieſt of mor-
'tals!

'But whither would my tender ima-
'gination carry me? I could dwell for
'ever on this delightful ſubject. My
'heart, warmed with your dear idea,
'would endeavour to make you ſenſible
'of what it feels for you. But how vaſt
'a diſproportion is there between the
'ſwell of melting thought and the flat-
'neſs of words! they were formed to
'convey mere vulgar conceptions, or,
'at moſt, emotions leſs ſtrong and af-
'fecting: I therefore want a thouſand
'nameleſs epithets to expreſs the force
'of my friendſhip, the delightful im-
'pulſes of my ſoul. But think not,
'dear Madam, that I have only gained
'a victory over a weak and feeble paſ-
'ſion. Did you know with what a vaſt
'exceſs I have loved, you might per-
'haps form ſome idea of that painful
'ſtruggle it has coſt me to conquer the
'moſt ardent affection, and reduce it to
'the diſintereſted ſtandard of that more
'ſober one which becomes a friend.
'But I beg pardon for my impertinence,
'which I am afraid has both tired and
'offended you; and therefore beg leave
'to ſubſcribe myſelf, Madam, your
'ſincereſt, and moſt devoted friend,

'LUCIUS.'

As ſoon as I had run over the above letter, a ſudden impulſe of tenderneſs made me preſs it to my lips with a moſt pleaſing extaſy.—Nay, you may laugh as much as you pleaſe; I kiſſed, I ſay, the dear character with a tranſport of delight; kiſſed the ſenſeleſs paper; and having preſſed it to my heart, and ſecured it in that ſituation, I aroſe and haſted to my chamber, in order to peruſe it more at my leiſure. I there read it over ſeveral times, but could not help reflecting how much pleaſure I loſt by that painful awe, which prevented his uttering the melting ſoftneſs of his heart when in my preſence. With what extaſy ſhould I have heard ſuch tender things from his lips, eſpecially when aſſiſted with the moving tone of his voice, and the more elegant language of his expreſſive countenance! I ſhould then have been all rapture. However, I at laſt reſolved to write an anſwer; when, after having blotted and ſcrawled over about half a dozen ſheets of paper without being able to pleaſe myſelf, I was obliged to lay aſide my deſign.

I could not diveſt myſelf of that ſoftneſs which his epiſtle had inſpired me with; all my efforts to this purpoſe proved ineffectual. A pleaſing languor, which hung upon my ſpirits, gave me ſuch a ſweet lethargy of thought, as rendered it impoſſible for me to expreſs any other ſentiments than thoſe of my heart; and they were indeed too tender to be communicated, eſpecially to a lover who wanted my father's approbation to give a ſanction to his paſſion. The next morning, however, I was more compoſed; and therefore wrote the following letter, which I have not yet had an opportunity of ſending to him.

'POOR LUCIUS!

'WERE I diſpoſed to triumph over
'the weakneſs of a lover, who
'in humble ſtrains of ſoft complaint
'lays himſelf at my mercy, I ſhould
'perhaps find ſubject enough in your
'epiſtle to rally your paſſion, as well as
'your pretended victory over it. But
'I have at preſent no inclination to in-
'dulge ſuch a ſavage gaiety, ſince it

'would probably give you pain. The flow 'of tender ſentiments, the delicacy of 'paſſion, which makes you deſire that 'I ſhould ſtill preſerve my eſteem for 'you, and your diſintereſted and warm 'concern for my happineſs, are ſo many 'proofs of your generoſity and intrinſick 'merit, that I cannot help feeling a very 'ſenſible pleaſure every time I reflect 'upon them. Your confuſion at my 'good fortune, which I confeſs I took 'particular notice of, was too natural 'for me to be very much offended at it; 'and indeed, I have rather pitied than 'blamed your diſtreſs. The advantages 'we receive from wealth, are as ſuper-'ficial, I believe, as any we enjoy; and 'while they deprive us of that ſincerity 'and unreſerved freedom, that open-'neſs of behaviour, which perſons in 'inferior circumſtances receive from 'their friends, they ſtrip us of the moſt 'engaging ſweets of life; bleſſings, 'which not all the luxury of incumber-'ing magnificence and ſtudied ſplendor, 'not all the homage of empty ceremony 'and ſervile ſubmiſſion, can atone for 'the want of. You ſee, Sir, I can mo-'ralize like any philoſopher, and you 'may poſſibly flatter yourſelf that you 'have taught me this doctrine. Do ſo 'if you pleaſe. I own my regard for 'you; and, however romantick the Pla-'tonick friendſhip you propoſe may ap-'pear, I readily accept of it, ſince that 'is all that either you or I ought to hope 'for. With my ſincere reſpect to my 'good friend, your ſiſter, I am, Sir, 'yours, &c.

'FELICIA.'

How many tender and affecting ſentiments was I here obliged to ſuppreſs! I was afraid of diſcovering the ſecrets of my heart, though he would doubtleſs be tranſported to find that I was as capable of love as himſelf, and that he had inſpired me with all that ſoftneſs that could flow from the moſt paſſionate affection. But to you I have diſcovered all my weakneſs, and depend upon your friendſhip and good nature to keep it an inviolable ſecret, eſpecially from my father, whoſe goodneſs I am reſolved never to abuſe by the leaſt act of diſobedience. I am, dear Charlotte, in ſpite of love, or any other rival paſſion, moſt ſincerely yours,

FELICIA.

LETTER VIII.

MADAM,

THE ſatisfaction you diſcovered, at the little converſation piece I gave you ſome account of, in one of my former letters, makes me glad of an opportunity to vary my ſubject, and leave the tender tale of love for a theme which even one of your gay diſpoſition will, I am ſure, think equally entertaining and inſtructive.

The day after I ſent you my laſt, we had the pleaſure of receiving a viſit from Mr. Stevens, the facetious old gentleman whoſe character you are pretty well acquainted with. The afternoon was ſpent very agreeably; but before he took leave, my aunt, who ſtill takes all imaginable pains to contribute to my ſatisfaction, by diverſifying my amuſements, propoſed our making a ſhort excurſion the next day to a nobleman's ſeat at no great diſtance from us. 'I 'have obſerved,' ſaid ſhe, ſmiling, 'that my niece appears very much de-'lighted with this part of the country; 'ſhe ſeems fond of agreeable landſcapes; 'and my deſire of retaining her here as 'long as poſſible, makes me willing to 'gratify this taſte, by ſhewing her ſuch 'as I don't doubt but ſhe will think 'both ſurprizing and agreeable. Will 'you, Sir, contribute to her ſatisfaction 'and ours, by giving us your company 'to-morrow? We are apt to be weary in 'the company of thoſe we daily converſe 'with; but a friend of your facetious turn 'will enliven our converſation, and find us 'conſtant matter for exerciſing our wit, 'and rendering us even more agreeable 'to ourſelves.' Mr. Stevens replied to this compliment in a very handſome manner; and at the ſame time added greatly to the pleaſure I had in proſpect, by ſaying, that if it would not be diſagreeable, he would increaſe our number, by bringing Lucius, and another friend with him, whoſe company he fancied would make our ſatisfaction compleat: when my aunt replied for us all, that we gladly accepted his offer, and that ſhe was ſure the gentleman's being his friend would be a ſufficient recommendation to us.

The next day before dinner we had the pleaſure of ſeeing our old friend return, accompanied by a young clergyman his relation, who had juſt finiſhed his

his ſtudies at Cambridge, and the engaging Lucius. Our repaſt was ſhort; and that being over, we ſet out in two coaches, Mr. Stevens's, and my aunt's. But I ſhall not attempt to give a particular deſcription of all the new and uncommon proſpects which diſcover themſelves in this delightful part of the country, where nature with a liberal hand pours out her favours, and with a profuſion of frolick bounty, ſpreads a wildneſs equally extravagant and pleaſing. I paſs over the beautiful landſcapes we drove through in this agreeable tour, for no other reaſon than becauſe the view I had of them was too ſudden to render me capable of deſcribing them; beſides, were it poſſible for me to do it to advantage, their being ſo perfectly extraordinary might reflect a little upon my veracity, and make you imagine that my deſcriptions were too uncommon to have any real exiſtence in nature.

Are you not ſurprized now, my dear Charlotte, that I can all this while forbear ſpeaking of my dear Lucius, ſince there is certainly a very exquiſite pleaſure in talking of the man we love! But the reaſon of my not mentioning him was, that as he went in the other coach, he could only give me now and then a glance, which ſeemed to expreſs a troubleſome kind of diffidence and ſuſpence, which I fancied aroſe from his longing to know what reception I gave his letter, and a fear leſt he had inſerted any thing in it that had offended me. At laſt, however, arriving at the park of my Lord M***, we by common conſent agreed to walk to the houſe. As ſoon as I ſtepped out of the coach, I could not help being extremely delighted with the agreeable ſcene which lay before us, and which I cannot for my life help giving you ſome deſcription of. Here the intermixture of duſky groves, and lightſome plains; of woods impervious to the rays of the ſun, which now ſpread his chearing beams around us, and the agreeable openings which diſcovered the bounding deer flying to the covert of the ſhady thicket; preſented a landſcape the moſt pleaſingly rural, and worthy the attention of the moſt curious obſerver; while we found ourſelves at the entrance of a grand walk, which extending to a prodigious length, grew inſenſibly narrower, till cloſing in perſpective, the viſto ſeemed loſt in the grove, out of which aroſe, as if by enchantment, ſeveral lofty ſtone turrets, which I afterwards found were part of a magnificent Gothick edifice, built in a moſt extraordinary taſte. In ſhort, the whole ſcene, notwithſtanding it's being very delightful, had ſuch a romantick appearance, that for ſome minutes I could think of nothing but caſtles and embowering ſhades, ariſing ſpontaneouſly to the charms of muſick; of the work of fairies, and the power of necromancy.

The company was no ſooner joined, than, after ſome compliments from the gentlemen in the other coach, and their deſiring to know my opinion of the tour we had taken, we fell inſenſibly into moralizing on the various beauties of nature, and comparing the natural connection there is between the exterior arrangements of bodies, which are formed to delight our ſenſes, and the proportions of internal beauty, the propriety of action, and the native amiableneſs of an honeſt, generous, and upright mind. That as nature had carefully formed the various ſenſes with different powers, adapted to convey delight to the ſoul, from the multitude of outward beings which ſurround us; ſo ſhe had been no leſs careful in forming the mind with taſtes and paſſions for directing it's purſuit to objects capable of raiſing it to the ſublimeſt pleaſures; while thoſe pleaſures not only reſult from it's purity, but are the very means of exalting it to ſtill higher degrees of perfection and happineſs. 'What a delightful ſenſation 'does this azure dome give the eye!' ſaid Lucius, with an air extremely graceful: 'Could the earth be covered with a 'more beautiful cieling, or a finer ca'nopy? What a pleaſing verdure clothes 'the ground, while it meets the limits 'of the high arch of heaven with in'termingling ſhades! a beautiful carpet 'for man and beaſt! But, all lovely as 'this ſcene appears, how much does it 'fall ſhort of the nobler landſcape of the 'mind! The honeſt man, whenever he 'pleaſes to review his actions, and con'template the ſituation of his heart, per'ceives a pleaſing extaſy ariſing from 'every inſtance of his integrity. He 'ſees a ſymmetry even more tranſport'ingly beautiful than this of nature; 'a proportion and arrangement of paſ'ſions incomparably more pleaſing than 'all the various diſpoſitions of light and 'ſhade, of woods and paſture, of mur'muring ſprings and falling torrents.

'How vaſt the difference between the 'moſt lovely ſcenes which can ariſe 'from the modifications of matter in it's 'moſt compleat perfection, between the 'tones of the moſt melting and har-'monious accents, and the nicer and 'more delicate ſenſations of an approv-'ing conſcience! An engaging inſtance 'of the divine wiſdom and benevolence, 'in conſtituting the very means of ad-'vancing the happineſs of others the 'means of procuring the ſublimeſt plea-'ſures to ourſelves!'—'Very true,' re-joined the clergyman with a ſmile; 'but 'if we compare the divine congratula-'tions of reaſon, the tranquil ſweetneſs 'and internal ſatisfaction of the bene-'volent man, the patriot, the friend of 'mankind, with the ſordid pleaſure of 'the ſucceſsfully ambitious, the trick-'ing knave, the abandoned debauchée; 'how vaſt, how immenſe a diſpropor-'tion ſhall we find in the nature of their 'enjoyments! enjoyments as widely 'diſtant as the high-wrought pleaſures 'of a God, and the low gratifications of 'the moſt groveſling animal.'—'Well, 'but, gentlemen,' replied my aunt, laughing, and pulling the clergyman by the ſleeve, 'methinks you might be ſo 'polite, notwithſtanding the rapture 'which ſeems to carry you out of your-'ſelves, to allow us a ſmall ſhare in the 'converſation. I am of the ſame opi-'nion with you, that as reaſon alone 'raiſes the man above the brute, ſo the 'pleaſures ariſing in the mind from a 'reaſonable conduct, muſt be infinitely 'ſuperior to thoſe of a mere ſenſualiſt. 'But how ſhall we be able to perſuade 'theſe degenerate mortals to believe ſo? 'Though they have no notion of the 'pure enjoyments of the ſoul; though 'they are as loſt to reaſon, as the herd 'that ranges in the field, or wallows in 'the ſtye; and, in ſhort, though ſome of 'them have hardly any thing of the man 'but the outward ſhape; yet they ſtill 'aſſert the dignity of their nature, and 'would think it an affront to be put 'upon a level with their brethren of the 'grinning tribe, though their views, 'their deſires, their gratifications, appear 'to be the ſame.'—'Your obſervation 'is very juſt, Madam,' returned the clergyman; 'for it is not the external 'form which conſtitutes the man: 'brutes differ in ſhape; and were there 'any particular ſpecies of them found 'out with features, proportions, and 'complexions exactly reſembling ours, 'we ſhould without heſitation conſider 'them only as mere animals, while they 'wanted thoſe noble qualifications of 'the mind, reaſon and judgment. Man '(the loweſt order of rational beings) 'is only raiſed above them by his intel-'lectual faculties; by a light capable 'of directing his purſuits, and raiſing 'him to the ſublimeſt elevation of paſ-'ſion and ſentiment. Strip him of this, 'or, which is much the ſame to him, let 'it lie clouded and obſcured, what is 'he but a groveling animal, without 'any of the real and diſtinguiſhing per-'fections of human nature? There is 'indeed this difference in the caſe, that 'man is a brute by choice, they by ne-'ceſſity: he voluntarily proſtitutes the 'noble powers of the ſoul, ſinks below 'the dignity of his being, and prefers 'the pleaſures of a mere animal to 'the manly entertainments of reaſon, 'the ſublime raptures of an angel. How 'ſhocked are we at the birth of a mon-'ſter, eſpecially if it has a likeneſs in 'any of it's features to one of thoſe 'creatures whom we juſtly regard as 'ſo much below us! We cannot here 'bear the leaſt reſemblance of the brute. 'Even the moſt bloody, the moſt har-'dened villain, is ſtruck with horror at 'this external depravity in one of his 'own offspring, and ſickens at the 'ſight; yet at the ſame time he can ſup-'port the more monſtrous diſproportion 'of his own corrupt and diſordered 'appetites.'—'Really,' replied Amelia, with a ſprightly air, 'I think the irra-'tional world are but little obliged 'to you for your compariſons: were 'they able to ſpeak for themſelves, they 'might very juſtly tell you, that they 'have no thoughts of luxury, pride, am-'bition, avarice, and the long train of 'enormities practiſed by mankind. The 'moſt ſavage and voracious animal never 'kills to encreaſe his wealth, or to open 'a way to grandeur. He ſlays to ſatisfy 'his hunger, or in a natural defence of 'his own life, or of thoſe whom he is 'prompted by inſtinct to preſerve.'

Lucius, perhaps influenced by an im-pulſe of benevolence, which would not ſuffer him to hear this ſtrong repreſenta-tion of the vices of mankind without ſeeling ſome uneaſineſs, preſerved all this while a profound ſilence; but finding

finding they had done, he was going to make a reply, when I prevented him, by saying—'You were pleased, Sir, some 'time ago, to vindicate mankind from 'the charge of a natural depravity and 'propension to vice; and I must confess, 'that I was charmed with your reasoning, though what I have now heard 'makes me a little suspect it. You 'know, you endeavoured to prove from 'experience, that, so far from having 'any natural impulse to lead us on to 'vice, we had a moral sense implanted 'in the mind, directly calculated to 'spur us on to the most amiable heights 'of virtue; but how is this consistent 'with the picture that has been just 'given, in which, perhaps, the far 'greatest part of mankind is included? 'I freely confess, that your sentiments 'of the moral sense made such an impression upon my mind, that I have 'considered it as a very favourite opinion, and therefore have waited all 'this while in expectation of it's being 'brought into the subject, with which 'it seems to have some connection; but 'instead of that, reason alone has been 'mentioned; though I imagined, that 'those inward impulses to virtuous actions superseded the use of it. But both, 'I find, are insufficient for the happiness 'of mankind, since there is undoubtedly more vice than virtue in the 'world.'—'It must be acknowledged, 'Miss,' said Lucius, 'that there is too 'much reason for the disagreeable representation that has been made of a 'general depravity. The most sacred 'engagements are daily violated; friendship and love, the most endearing 'bonds of society, are made a cloak to 'perpetrate the most execrable villainies, 'the ruin of innocence, the destruction 'of the unsuspecting and honest man. 'The traitor to his country assumes the 'honourable name of the patriot, and 'pretends to be struggling for liberty, 'while he is only paving the way to 'greatness, in order to riot in the spoils 'of his injured fellow-subjects. In short, 'whole orders and degrees of men seem 'infected with the dreadful contagion 'of vice, and a more than brutal dissoluteness of manners. A dreadful 'spectacle indeed! a shocking depravity, that must fill every generous mind 'with an affectionate pity and concern! 'But let us leave this gloomy, this disagreeable subject; and, with hearts 'warmed with a love of truth and virtue, impartially enquire if vice is really 'so prevalent as, upon a superficial view, 'it appears to be; by which means, I 'hope, you will be convinced, that virtue reigns more universally than vice; 'and that by the constitution of nature, 'mankind have, even in this imperfect 'state, more real, more exquisite happiness than misery: an estimate of 'the utmost consequence both to the 'honour of human nature, and to demonstrate the wisdom and benevolence 'of that moral Being, who is the father 'of the human soul, and the invariable, 'inexhaustible source, of the most perfect and compleat goodness.

'In order then to form a right judgment of mankind, not the band of 'ruffians, not the publick or private 'stews, not the gloomy dungeon filled 'with guilty wretchedness; but mankind 'in general must be the subject of our examination. We must extend our views, 'and glance upon the virtues and vices 'of all the known world: and here we 'shall find the greatest reason for an 'universal benevolence; we shall see 'with pleasure a noble simplicity of 'manners, and an integrity of heart, 'delightfully conspicuous amidst the 'barbarism of ignorance, the superstition of wild uncultivated nations. We 'shall see the same love of their country, 'the same tender sensibilities of friendship, the same natural affection, the 'same reciprocal endearing offices of 'social life, among the far distant unpolished savages, as among the polite 'and learned Europeans. Nature even 'here works strongly; virtue and vice 'have names in all languages; and so 'deeply is the image of the Deity impressed upon universal nature, that 'every rational being has in general 'the same sense of an obligation, the 'same delightful sensations arising from 'the consideration of the native and 'intrinsick excellence of actions beneficent, disinterested and generous.

'Let us next consider if the usual 'manner of forming a judgment of private actions be consistent with truth 'and equity. While the mind, like the 'eye, can only glance on the surface of 'things, we can have but a very narrow 'view of the springs and motives which 'actuate even our dearest friends, and 'most intimate acquaintance. How incapable then are we to form a just

'opinion

'opinion of the actions of thoſe whoſe 'paſſions, whoſe inclinations and pe-'culiar turn of mind, we are entirely 'unacquainted with! We are free in 'our cenſures; we precipitately blame 'the conduct of others; yet, however 'certain we may think the judgment is 'which we paſs upon their conduct, a 'little time often convinces us, that our 'concluſion was formed merely upon 'fallacious appearances; and that we 'judged of the motive, not from the 'action it was really formed to produce, 'but from the falſe and deceitful light it 'appeared in to us: a conſideration 'that ſhould kill at once all diſpoſition 'to calumny and cenſoriouſneſs, the 'blackeſt and moſt ignominious of all 'vices. Thus it frequently happens, 'that thoſe actions which, at firſt view, 'ſeem vicious, upon a more ſtrict exa-'mination, appear to be ſtrictly virtu-'ous; and from this experience of the 'erroneouſneſs of our judgments, and 'that the truth of the caſe, when diſco-'vered, generally leans to the ſide of 'virtue, it will not ſure be thought un-'reaſonable to conclude that it is gene-'rally ſo in other inſtances; and that if 'the real ſpring and motive to action 'was conſidered, virtue would prepon-'derate, and her votaries be even more 'numerous than the votaries of vice.

'The moral ſenſe, Madam, is a taſte 'for what is amiable; that diſtinguiſh-'ing faculty of the mind which makes 'us *feel*, ſenſibly and ſtrongly *feel*, the 'harmony and diſcord of actions. It 'is the *touch*, the *ear* of the ſoul; while 'reaſon is the *eye* to regulate the exer-'tions of this ſympathetick faculty. 'The moral ſenſe feels inſtantaneouſly, 'without waiting for the ſlow delibera-'tion of the rational powers, to know 'if it ought to do ſo: while reaſon is 'given us to reign ſupreme, to examine 'the fitneſs of the object by which we 'are intendered, and to regulate in what 'manner we muſt exert our benevolent 'offices, ſo as beſt to render our endea-'vours ſubſervient to the general good 'and happineſs. Thus reaſon, like a 'mild and gracious prince, is to direct 'the will, and give laws to the paſſions 'and appetites, in ſuch a manner as not 'only to promote the general intereſt and 'felicity of the mind it inhabits, but to 'diffuſe it's friendly and benign influ-'ences to all it's fellow minds; and 'when this is the caſe, we act in confor-'mity to the moſt perfect virtue. On 'the contrary, vice is nothing elſe but 'a miſapplication and abuſe of ſome 'right and laudable affections; ſo evi-'dent is it, without arguing from the 'perfections of the Deity, that he has 'not formed any of his creatures with a 'vicious bias and propenſity.'

Here the clergyman ſeeing Lucius make a pauſe, rejoined—'The inten-'tion ought always to be the rule of our 'judgment on the conduct of others: for 'in this ſtate of imperfection and diffi-'culty, we are ſometimes unable to 'reduce our wills, however regular, into 'proper action; and indeed the event 'does but ſeldom correſpond with our 'diſpoſitions. We ought not therefore 'to determine a character vicious from 'one or two bad actions; nor, from the 'comparatively few abandoned wretch-'es, to pronounce human nature in ge-'neral abandoned. But by what means 'are we able to judge of the intention, 'or to ſearch into the ſecret ſprings of 'action? We cannot take in half thoſe 'minute circumſtances that attend them, 'the leaſt of which might poſſibly be 'ſufficient to alter our opinion: ſo far 'from this, we judge, not according 'to the temper and ſituation of the per-'ſon cenſured, but from our own par-'ticular ſenſe of things. Thus, to a 'generous, open mind, a little parſi-'mony may appear as a mark of a 'narrow contracted ſpirit; but, upon exa-'mination into the perſon's circumſtan-'ces, it will be found, perhaps, to be 'nothing more than a prudent concern 'for the welfare and ſupport of his fa-'mily; and, ſo far from being a blemiſh 'on his virtuous character, that it may 'be an effect of that virtue which it 'ſeems to contradict. But, farther to 'illuſtrate this engaging truth, which 'ſeems abſolutely neceſſary to the peace 'and ſatisfaction of every benevolent 'and compaſſionate mind, let us con-'ſider that, in this ſtate of imperfection, 'we are no more capable of arriving at a 'perfection in vice, than we are of vir-'tue. The moſt abandoned of our ſpe-'cies have ſome amiable qualities 'which it is impoſſible for them to 'eraſe: virtue has ſtill ſome engaging 'charms; nor is it poſſible for any man 'of common ſenſe not to feel the force 'of it's attractive beauties; therefore if, 'deceived by falſe appearances and de-'luſive proſpects of preſent pleaſure,

'they

'they rebel in one inſtance, there are 'others in which they venerate her ſa-'cred laws.'

Be ſincere now, my dear Charlotte, and confeſs that I have wearied you with the repetition of this grave converſation. A variety of other remarks were made upon the ſame ſubjects, which entertained us till we arrived at the houſe; but, in pity to you and myſelf, I ſhall make haſte to conclude, and only ſay, that we were entertained with much politeneſs by my Lord; when having drank tea, we drove home, highly delighted with our agreeable excurſion. But there is one particular that I ought not to forget to mention, and that is, that before I took leave of Lucius, I found an opportunity to give him my letter. He received it with an air of aſtoniſhment and confuſion, imagining, I believe, that it was his own I returned; but a ſudden glance of his eye in a moment diſcovered his miſtake, when his countenance changed from a troubled paleneſs to a glowing red. He had not then an opportunity of ſpeaking to me; but giving me a look ſparkling with joy and ſurprize, he retired in ſuch a manner as diſcovered his impatience to know the contents. I am now heartily weary; and, begging you would pardon the impertinence of your friend, ſubſcribe myſelf, Madam, your moſt obliged, affectionate friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER IX.

MY DEAR ENGAGING FRIEND,

COULD I poſſibly imagine that, with a temper ſo eaſy, gay, and ſprightly, I ſhould be able to make ſuch a change in your diſpoſition, as I find my illneſs has occaſioned! How endearing is that tender concern, that pleaſing warmth of affection, with which you intereſt yourſelf in my diſorder, and endeavour to ſupport my ſpirits by ſoothing ſympathies, the reviving conſolations of friendſhip!

It is now two months ſince I was ſeized with a fever, and I have yet hardly ſtrength to write to you; but I cannot forbear making an attempt to remove your fears, by telling you as ſoon as poſſible, that I am at laſt out of danger. I have lately had a near proſpect of death; but while I ſtood upon the verge of that awful ſtate, that undiſcovered country, 'from whoſe bourn no traveller returns,' I felt my mind calm and ſerene, as if charmed with the inſpiring harmony of ſome angelick choir: all before me was extaſy! the moſt tranſporting extaſy! raptures unutterable! delights boundleſs and eternal! But my intervals of ſenſe were ſhort, and diſturbed with pain; I was almoſt continually delirious; and in theſe diſtractions of mind inceſſantly repeated the beloved name of my dear Lucius. I gave him the tendereſt epithets; and, wrapt in a fond deluſion of thought, fancied he walked with me through the moſt delicious ſcenes imagination could paint, uttering the ſofteſt, the moſt melting words; to which I replied in terms full of the ſame paſſionate tenderneſs. The whole family were witneſſes of theſe wild rovings of fancy, which cannot fail of raiſing ſome ſuſpicions of what I have endeavoured to conceal with the utmoſt care; though none but Amelia has taken notice of it to me, But how Lucius behaved I am yet altogether unacquainted, nor durſt I enquire.

I find, my dear Charlotte, that I muſt break off: a painful languor depreſſes my ſoul; my ſpirits ſink, and I am too much fatigued to proceed. If what I write is either unintelligible, or more than commonly incoherent, a trembling hand and giddy head are my excuſe; but, however indiſpoſed I am, nothing ſhall excuſe me from being, dear Madam, ſincerely yours,

FELICIA.

LETTER X.

MADAM,

I Am now able to write you a longer letter than my laſt; a circumſtance that gives me the higheſt pleaſure; ſo glad am I of reſuming my literary converſation with you.

As ſoon as I was able to leave my room and receive company, I had a viſit from the maiden lady, Mr. Stevens's ſiſter, whom I ſhall diſguiſe under the name of Prudilla; and indeed I had no reaſon to be offended at ſeeing her, ſince I might well bear with her impertinence for the ſake of the perſon ſhe brought with her. Lucius, impatient for an opportunity of ſeeing me, which he durſt not even attempt alone, for fear of giving my aunt ſome ſuſpicion of the intereſt

intereſt he had in my recovery, had offered his ſervice to wait upon her; which ſhe accepting, gave us both the means of indulging, by our mutual glances, the tender ſentiments which ſwelled our boſoms. The moment he entered the room, I could read in his looks that he had a thouſand things to ſay to me, only proper to be uttered in private. His countenance diſcovered a joy, which glowed in every feature; but when he congratulated me upon my returning health, a fear of ſaying too much made him ſay too little; but however few his words, the air and moving tone in which he uttered them ſufficiently expreſſed how much they came from his heart. 'Need I tell you, Madam,' ſaid he, turning his back to my aunt, doubtleſs to prevent her reading his looks, 'that 'I ſympathize with the reſt of your 'friends in their joy for your recovery?' While a ſtarting tear, and a glance the moſt charmingly tender, made me at once interpret his meaning, and fancy that he would have ſaid—'O my dear! 'with what tranſport do I ſee you again! 'How vaſtly does my extaſy at your 'recovery exceed the cold joy of theſe 'other friends!'

Our firſt compliments being over, and abundance of queſtions aſked concerning the nature and progreſs of my illneſs, Prudilla introduced a piece of private hiſtory, which gave her a charming opportunity of indulging for a few minutes her prevailing inclinations for detraction. 'Have you heard the news, 'ladies?' ſaid ſhe, aſſuming an air of ſtarched modeſty: 'really, it is ſo extra-'ordinary, that it makes one aſhamed 'of one's ſex. To what a prepoſterous 'height of wickedneſs is the world 'grown! Poſitively one is ſurprized to 'think of the imprudence of ſome peo-'ple. Would you think it? Miſs Lucy 'was—— I bluſh for the creature.'—'Pray, Madam,' ſaid my aunt, 'ex-'plain yourſelf; what of Miſs Lucy?'—'Really,' rejoined Prudilla, 'the af-'fair is ſo indecent, that it is a ſhock to 'modeſty but to mention it.'—'Well, 'Madam,' ſaid I, 'rather than offend 'your delicacy, we will let Miſs Lucy 'alone, and change the ſubject.'—'That is kind, my dear,' returned ſhe, ſmiling: 'ſhe was brought to bed laſt 'night. I am ſure I am all of a flame 'now,' added ſhe; 'and the crea-'ture——' 'O Madam,' cried Lucius, with a deſign to make her change the ſubject, 'that modeſt bluſh becomes 'you incomparably!' Here all the company ſmiled, for Prudilla's cheeks diſcovered not the leaſt tincture of her pretended confuſion: however, his artifice had no effect. 'Really,' reſumed ſhe, bridling back her head, and drawing up her lips, 'a bluſh does ſometimes be-'come one mightily, which is ſome re-'compence for the pain it gives one—'but, as I was ſaying, the thing has the 'impudence to excuſe herſelf by pre-'tending——' At this moment my phyſician entered the room, and gave her the mortification of being again interrupted, by his aſking me ſeveral queſtions; but at laſt taking a chair, ſhe reſumed a third time—'As I was a ſay-'ing, Madam——' 'Pray, ladies,' cried the phyſician, interrupting her again, 'may I know the ſubject of 'your converſation?'—'Yes, Sir,' replied Amelia: 'our friend here was 'mentioning a circumſtance relating to 'an unhappy lady that has been de-'luded, and was brought to bed laſt 'night.'—'Very good,' replied he. 'Not ſo good neither,' cried the prude in a peeviſh tone: 'the impudent ſlut 'would excuſe herſelf, by ſaying——' 'O, ſhe would perſuade us to believe, I 'ſuppoſe,' cried the doctor, with a ſneer, 'that the young gentleman, after 'promiſing her marriage, and ſwearing 'a thouſand oaths to convince her of 'his fidelity, finding at laſt all his ar-'guments prove unſucceſsful, in a fit 'of deſpair drew his ſword; when, 'pointing it to his boſom, he pretended 'that, ſince ſhe was ſo cruel as to diſtruſt 'his ſincerity, he would give her the laſt 'proof of the violence of his paſſion. 'Here, terrified at this dreadful ſight, 'and melting with pity, ſhe flies upon 'him, ſtops his hand, tells him that ſhe 'is convinced of his ſincerity, and will 'give him every proof of it he can rea-'ſonably deſire. He now eagerly ſeizes 'the tender moment, preſſes her cloſe, 'till ſhe at laſt conſents to purchaſe his 'life with the loſs of what ought to be 'infinitely dearer to her than her own: 'while he, in the mean time, laughs to 'find her become the dupe of his arti-'fice; ridicules her fooliſh fondneſs, 'that could make her think him in ear-'neſt; and, in ſhort, glories in the *noble* 'victory he has gained over her honour. 'This, to be ſure, was the caſe,' continued

nued he; 'at leaſt we ſhould be chari-
'table enough to think ſo, in vindica-
'tion of the poor lady.'

We all ſmiled at this piece of raillery; while Prudilla diſcovered, by her unſettled looks, that ſhe was at a loſs to know whether ſhe ought to diſapprove or commend this inſtance of the phyſician's vivacity; ſince ſhe could not gueſs whether it was intended to ridicule all the excuſes that could be made in her favour, or to apologize for her conduct. But, the moment he had done ſpeaking, Lucius rejoined, with a modeſt, unaffected air—'We ought not to wonder, 'if an artful villain can ſometimes triumph over a mind, who, knowing itſelf incapable of deceit, can hardly be 'brought to ſuſpect another, eſpecially 'the man ſhe loves, of a guilt the moſt 'black and ſhocking to nature: but 'that an honeſt man ſhould be ſo hurried away by the favour of impetuous 'deſire, is indeed a caſe very extraordinary, and not eaſily accounted for. 'Can a virtuous man be ſo void of reaſon, ſo loſt to prudence and the tender 'delicacies of an innocent paſſion, as to 'hazard for a moment the honour and 'reputation of her he loves? Will he 'not even diſtruſt himſelf? Nay, ſuppoſing him ever ſo certain of the integrity of his own heart, are there not a 'variety of circumſtances which may 'render it impoſſible for him to fulfil 'his engagements? And muſt not the 'bare poſſibility of this damp even the 'very firſt idea of a too precipitate pleaſure which may be ſo dearly bought? 'The leaſt apprehenſion of ruining the 'object of his tendereſt affections, muſt 'ſurely give him the moſt dreadful 'alarms, and fill his mind with the moſt 'dreadful fears, the moſt terrible conflicts.'—'And is it not equally ſurprizing,' returned my aunt, 'that a 'modeſt lady can hear a propoſal of this 'kind without being ſhocked! without 'looking into the gulf of miſery and 'ruin which lies before her! without 'trembling at the dangers which ſurround her! without imploring the Divine aſſiſtance, and reſolving to loſe 'her life, rather than taint her virtue, 'or ſurrender her honour upon the faireſt promiſes! But, alas! we frequently 'ſee people act without thought, and, 'unintimidated by the miſery of thoſe 'who have fallen into the ſame ſnare, 'precipitately ruſh upon their own de-
'ſtruction! A promiſe of marriage is 'the uſual bait; but this unhappy lady's ſtory ought to convince every 'one that, even in the neareſt proſpect 'of that union, it is the higheſt degree 'of folly and madneſs to drop the guard 'of innocence, and allow her intended 'huſband liberties inconſiſtent with decency, and the reſerve of a modeſt 'prudence.'

'It is a great misfortune,' rejoined Lucius with an air of candour, 'that in 'this caſe a falſe ſtep (which may poſſibly proceed from nothing more than 'imprudence, or a too eaſy confidence) 'ſhould be attended with ſuch dreadful conſequences with reſpect to the ladies, and one action throw an indelible 'ſtain on the faireſt character; while another perſon, of an infinitely worſe diſpoſition, may indulge the rancour 'of her heart in ſporting with the honour and reputation of thouſands. 'Miſs Lucy is a lady poſſeſſed of ſo 'many virtues, that if the caſe required 'it, every one, I think, would be glad 'of ſeeing reaſon to believe her leſs criminal than ſhe may appear at firſt 'view; but, if I am not miſinformed, 'there is no need of wiſhing for reaſons to excuſe her conduct. A variety of 'extraordinary circumſtances are in her 'favour: her modeſty and virtue have 'ſtood the ſevereſt ſhock; and, if it be 'thought that ſhe has here loſt all pretenſions to them, it ought to be conſidered too, that the day ſhe forfeited 'them appeared to her, and to all her 'friends, the laſt of her freedom. The 'next day was to have given him that 'right to her perſon, which love, a reciprocal love, had conſtituted long before. She was his by obligations the 'moſt ſacred and binding; obligations 'that can only be confirmed and rendered legal by the aſſiſtance of the magiſtrate or prieſt. They thought themſelves ſecure in each other's fidelity; 'they fancied nothing could prevent the 'happy ceremony from being ſolemnized: but, alas! life itſelf is precarious; that very night he was ſeized 'with a malignant fever, which, though 'it carried him off in a few days, in all 'his intervals of ſenſe he acknowledged 'his engagements; and, even in his laſt 'moments, he called her his wife; and 'confirmed the right he had given her 'in his will to poſſeſs his eſtate, by frequently expreſſing his deſire of having

'it faithfully executed.'—'How!' cried Prudilla, in a lofty tone of authority, 'do you pretend to vindicate the creature? If she has loſt her reputation, it 'is no more than ſhe deſerves. I would 'have no mercy on ſuch impudent, confident things. Can any puniſhment 'be great enough for the ſluts who are 'ſuch a diſgrace to the modeſty of our 'ſex? They ſhould be all burnt alive, 'or hanged at leaſt.'—'Hold, Madam,' replied my aunt, haſtily interrupting her; 'indeed, you are too ſevere. It muſt be 'confeſſed, indeed, that both ſhe and 'her lover were much to blame: they 'were certainly guilty of the higheſt 'degree of imprudence and folly; but 'you ought to conſider, too, that virtue 'does not conſiſt in the loſs of humanity 'and good manners. I was preſent 'when the young gentleman expired; 'and was witneſs of a ſcene that I ſhall 'never forget as long as I live; the very 'remembrance brings tears to my eyes. 'A few minutes before he breathed his 'laſt, his ſenſes, which had been long 'diſturbed, returned; when calling for 'his dear wife, Lucy, who ſat near the 'bed drowned in grief, and fatigued 'with conſtant watching, ſtarted from 'her ſilent ſadneſs, while her impatience 'to know what he had to ſay, ſuſpended 'for a moment the falling tear. He 'preſſed her in his weak and trembling 'arms, and endeavoured in the moſt 'endearing manner to enable her to ſupport his loſs; ſaid the kindeſt, the moſt 'affecting things; till at laſt his countenance brightening into a placid ſerenity, he lifted up his eyes to Heaven, 'and ſtill preſſing her hand, ſeemed to 'make her the ſubject of ſome ardent 'petition; but he had no ſooner finiſhed 'his ſilent ejaculations, than fixing a 'moſt tender look upon her, he cried—'"Adieu! my Lucy, my wife!" when 'ſhutting his eyes, he ſunk upon the 'pillow and expired. But what words 'can expreſs the unhappy Lucy's deſpair! 'She fainted away upon his lifeleſs body; 'her cheek lay upon his, and equalled 'the mortal paleneſs of that it preſſed. I 'aſſiſted in carrying her out of the room, 'and recovering her ſenſes; but they no 'ſooner returned, than (ſad effect of the 'moſt violent grief!) her tears, her inceſſant tears, were ſtopped; and ſhe gave 'way to a ſilent ſober melancholy, infinitely more terrible than the ſtrongeſt 'impulſes of raging deſpair.'—'Alas!' cried Lucius, in a tone that plainly expreſſed the compaſſionate diſpoſition of his heart, 'how much is this poor lady to be 'pitied! but would not her diſtreſs, her 'ſhame, her infamy, have been greater, if 'her grief had ſprung from his infidelity 'rather than his death? She now juſtly 'laments a man every way worthy of her 'eſteem and affection; his memory is 'ſtill dear to her; his virtues are a pleaſing ſubject of melancholy delight and 'ſoothing pain. But with what agonies of rage, vexation, and madneſs, 'would ſhe have ſuſtained the ſhock of 'finding the man falſe on whoſe fidelity 'ſhe had repoſed her honour! with what 'mortifying inquietudes would ſhe find 'herſelf contemned by him ſhe loved! 'yet the guilt would in fact be his; the 'folly and imprudence hers. Conſcious of the purity of an innocent heart, 'her ſevereſt reproaches muſt fall upon 'the guilty villain, the barbarous betrayer of her peace and happineſs, and 'not immediately on herſelf. Yet how 'vaſtly different muſt be the reflections 'of a lady in theſe circumſtances, from 'thoſe of the ſelf-deteſted proſtitute, the 'abandoned wretch, who from avarice, 'ambition, or guilty deſire, covers herſelf with eternal infamy and reproach; 'with irreparable loſs of honour; with 'the averſion of all the wiſe and good; 'with the ſilent, but infinitely more 'dreadful upbraidings of a guilty conſcience; the horrors of remorſe, and 'that agonizing dread which accompanies a conſciouſneſs of the Divine 'diſpleaſure, doubly terrible in all her 'views of futurity! What ſuperlative 'wretchedneſs! Can imagination paint 'any diſtreſs equal to that which thus 'ariſes from the racking perturbation of 'a mind aſhamed of itſelf? or can all the 'boaſted advantages of wealth, pride, 'and ſucceſsful ambition, (the trifles for 'which the tranquil ſweets of innocence 'are forfeited) ſupport the ſpirits ſinking under ſuch a flood of complicated 'miſery?'

Here Lucius concluded; and ſome ladies coming in at the ſame time, the converſation took a different turn. I leave you now, my dear Charlotte, to make what reflections you pleaſe upon what I have here related; but I could not ſee Lucius retire with the reſt, without feeling an uneaſineſs that let me know the exceſs of my paſſion. However, he had the addreſs, in parting, to

ſlip the following letter into my hand unperceived; he delivered it with an air of tenderneſs, ſaying with a low voice—'Since I am not permitted, Madam, either to ſend or ſpeak to you alone, forgive the abſurdity of my being my own meſſenger.' I made no other anſwer than wiſhing him a good night; and as ſoon as he was gone, ſeized the firſt opportunity of retiring to my chamber, when ſecuring the door, to prevent my being ſurprized, I broke open the ſeal, and read the following lines—

'DEAR MADAM,

'IF you knew with what an exceſs of grief I have lamented your illneſs, while I conſidered you on the borders of the grave, you might perhaps form ſome idea of that ſweet, that tranſporting joy, with which I find you returning to life, and all the ſatisfactions of health and eaſe. I cannot help regarding your phyſician as my deareſt friend; I could hug him to my boſom for contributing to your recovery, at the ſame time that I bleſs the unſeen hand of Providence, and pour out my grateful heart to that moſt gracious Being who has heard my prayers, who has beheld with compaſſion my inceſſant tears. Amelia's friendſhip for my ſiſter, and the concern they have both in all that relates to you, have procured me an opportunity of learning every day the ſtate of your diſorder, without my running the hazard of diſcovering my paſſion to your aunt, by a ſolicitude that would doubtleſs render me ſuſpected. Yet what a multitude of hopes and fears has this correſpondence given! in a ſwift ſucceſſion they have raiſed my ſoul to ſudden rapture, and then ſunk me down into the moſt dreadful deſpair! Sad viciſſitude! All my happineſs ſeemed to depend upon your life; and while that was at ſtake, a proſpect of inevitable miſery lay before me. All joy ſeemed departing. A ſolitary ſadneſs, a dreary gloom, hung upon my ſpirits, and hovered round the various beauties of nature; they had no charms for me. Not wealth nor titles, with all their ſplendour, could have calmed the anguiſh occaſioned by your loſs. While I thought that the moſt lovely form and the faireſt mind were near being ſeparated, my heart-ſtrings were ready to burſt, as if the very ſeat of life and vital heat was going to be torn from my boſom. Religion only had power to moderate my grief, and by it's reviving conſolations diſperſe the darkening clouds which hung about my ſoul. But how ſhall I be able to deſcribe the ſudden extaſy, the tranſporting rapture, which filled my breaſt, when I heard that you were out of danger! I ſickened with a ſweet exceſs of delight. But, alas! to what purpoſe are theſe involuntary tranſports? Why do I place all my happineſs in ſeeing and hearing you, ſince no ſacred ties will ever bind us together, and ſecure the continuance of theſe innocent enjoyments? Accept, however, of my warmeſt congratulations; and while my happineſs depends entirely upon yours, believe me to be the ſincereſt and moſt affectionate of your ſervants,

'LUCIUS.'

I confeſs, my dear friend, that I could not read this letter without tears, and indulging ſome reflections on the unhappineſs of my ſituation; but as it is time to conclude my long epiſtle, I ſhall paſs over theſe unquiet thoughts, and ſubſcribe myſelf your moſt hearty friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER XI.

FROM Amaranthine bowers, and embrowning ſhades; from flowery lawns, and all the ſilent ſolemn ſcenes of peaceful innocence and harmleſs love; thy friend Felicia greets her other ſelf, her dear, her much loved Charlotte.

Don't you think now, my dear, by this beginning, that I am tolerably well read in romance, and have drank deep of the ſpirit of thoſe extraordinary performances? At leaſt I think I ought to have ſome knowledge of them, ſince I ſeem to be writing one myſelf. My plot now begins to thicken; and I ſhall certainly, if ever theſe letters come to light, be conſidered, in ſome future time, as a little heroine; while Lucius will have an undiſputed claim to the honour of being the hero of my ſtory. He has now a very formidable obſtacle to encounter with, before he can even hope to arrive at the height of his happineſs: but you need not be frighted, here are no fiery dragons to conquer, or inchant-

ed caſtles to ſtorm; my paſtoral adventure will furniſh no ſuch prodigies. I will therefore leave theſe marvellous events to the doughty wonder-working champions of ancient date, and content myſelf with ſticking cloſe to truth and nature; and don't doubt but that, in the ruſtick ſimplicity in which I ſpend my time, I ſhall furniſh a hiſtory at leaſt as entertaining as theirs. And, indeed, whatever name is given to my ſtory, whether of rural adventures, novel, or romance, I ſhould be very well ſatisfied, though all the world thought it fictitious, might I at laſt (which I hardly dare hope for) have it concluded, like the moſt celebrated pieces of imaginary ſcenes of love and gallantry, in a happy cataſtrophe.

As I am very fond of my couſin Polly, who is one of the prettieſt little creatures you ever ſaw, I frequently amuſe myſelf, and divert her, with gathering flowers, making garlands, and ſometimes placing them in her hair, or adorning her head with a wreath, as agreeable for it's odours as for the intermingled luſtre of it's glowing colours. You cannot imagine, Madam, how charmingly the dear child looks when thus adorned; you would be apt to take her for ſome little ſylvan deity, or one of the inhabitants of the ſkies. The weather being extremely fine, we went yeſterday morning into the garden to divert ourſelves in this innocent manner; when having ſpent ſome time in our childiſh paſtime, a deſire to indulge at large my own reflections, made me leave my young companion, and retire into a neighbouring field; there I ſeated myſelf on a riſing bank, beneath which ran a ſtream that, flowing ſwiftly with a gentle murmur, drew my attention, and fixed my eyes upon the various-coloured pebbles which ſhone through the liquid cryſtal. But though theſe trifles engaged my looks, my heart was fixed upon an object infinitely more important; I was thinking of my dear Lucius, and enumerating in idea not only his ſeveral perfections, but recollecting all the fine things I had heard him ſay: and could I be entertained in a manner more delightful? But I had not long indulged theſe pleaſing contemplations, when I was interrupted by my little prattler, who ſeeing me at a diſtance, came running with her hands full of flowers. I was then ſo buried in thought, that I did not ſee her till ſhe was almoſt come up to me, when calling me to look at her treaſure, and to obſerve ſome carnations ſhe herſelf had been placing in her hair, I was ſo vexed at being diſturbed in my pleaſing dreams, that I could not help anſwering her a little peeviſhly, and deſiring her to leave me. She was juſtly ſurprized to ſee my humour ſo ſoon changed; and, with a voice that ſpoke her out of breath with running, ſaid, ſhe wondered how ſhe had made me angry; but that ſhe would not leave me till I had forgiven her. The tears now trickling down her roſy cheeks, made me in a moment aſhamed of my ſudden ill-nature. I took her in my arms, and fondly kiſſing her, told her I only deſired to be a few minutes alone, and begged ſhe would tell me what ſhe wanted. 'You told me,' ſaid ſhe, reſuming her uſual ſweetneſs, 'that theſe 'flowers made me look very pretty; 'won't they, Madam, make you look 'pretty too? I wanted to make you as 'fine as you made me. Won't you 'let me dreſs your head?' I could not help ſmiling at this queſtion; but upon her perſiſting in her requeſt, I at laſt conſented; and fancying nobody could poſſibly ſee me, reſolved to do as ſhe deſired, and afterwards lead her through the garden, to divert my aunt and Amelia with her childiſh frolick. I therefore took a ribband out of my pocket, and enamelling it with the brighteſt colours I could ſelect from thoſe ſhe brought me, bound it round my head; when an impulſe of curioſity made me haſtily go nearer the brook, to place it to advantage, and ſee how well it became me. Here I ſtaid ſome time with my eyes fixed on the watery mirror, holding the beauteous child by her hand, and obſerving the different effects theſe fantaſtick ornaments had in the countenances of our ſhadowy images. I was now in a moſt gay and lively humour, and lifting up my eyes with a chearful ſmile, was going to propoſe our return home, when I was ſtruck with the ſight of a well-dreſſed gentleman, who ſtood gazing upon us from the oppoſite bank, and who had doubtleſs been a witneſs of all my fooleries. Innocent as my amuſement had been, I could not at firſt recover from the confuſion and diſorder this ſpectator gave me. However, I

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turned haſtily, and taking hold of Miſs Polly's hand, began to move towards the garden; at the ſame time pulling off my various-coloured tiara, threw it on the ground; when the ſtranger having ſtood ſtill for a moment, ſuddenly leaped from the oppoſite bank, haſted after me, and ſeizing the hand that was at liberty, after a deluge of compliments, which diſcovered at leaſt his good-breeding, conducted me home. My aunt immediately, by her behaviour, let me ſee that ſhe was far from being diſpleaſed with my companion; ſhe treated him with the utmoſt reſpect, yet endeavoured frequently to dive into his thoughts, by examining his countenance with a ſcrupulous and ſteady inſpection. She ſeemed to penetrate his very ſoul; not the leaſt geſture could eſcape her notice; yet ſhe was ſo cautious in theſe piercing regards, that it was impoſſible for him to obſerve them; and indeed her looks all the while expreſſed a ſatisfaction that let me ſee that, whatever diſcoveries ſhe had made, they were far from being diſagreeable to her; for whenever my eyes met hers, I could eaſily diſcern an affectionate kind of joy, which ſeemed to ariſe from the tender glow of a warm heart.

The gentleman behaved all this while with the moſt perfect eaſe and freedom; and, without appearing under the leaſt conſtraint by the old lady's preſence, entertained me with the confident freedom of an old lover, who thinks he has a right to our tenderneſs and reſpect. Nay, he told my aunt, even in my preſence, the ſituation in which he found me; the manner in which he ſaid I attracted his eyes and heart; informed her of the minuteſt circumſtance relating to my behaviour; deſcribed the flowers which adorned my head; drew a compariſon between them; and, to uſe his own words, the more lovely and attractive beauties of my cheeks. Nor was my ſhape, my air, forgotten; he took me for ſome goddeſs; I could certainly be no leſs than one of the immortals. Here he diſcovered all the heathen mythology he had learnt at ſchool; proteſted that he miſtook me for Flora; and leſt I ſhould be too ſimple to underſtand the honour that was done me by this compariſon, told me that ſhe was one of the moſt charming of all the goddeſſes, and could be equalled in beauty by none upon earth but me. In ſhort, he even offered to go himſelf and fetch the flowery wreath that ſo much became me; aſſured us, that the firſt moment he ſaw me was the laſt of his liberty; and aſſerted, that if I would conſent to be his, he ſhould ever after our marriage oblige me to perpetuate the remembrance of that happy day, by wearing upon it a like blooming crown.

Thus he ran on for a quarter of an hour together, without giving either my aunt or me an opportunity of ſpeaking a ſingle ſyllable; he was all life and gaiety, and attempted to divert me at the ſame time that he ſtrove to find a way to my heart. He thought it impoſſible that I ſhould be inſenſible to the force of flattery, and therefore attacked my vanity with inceſſant praiſes. One moment he ſeemed melting in tenderneſs; but then immediately recovering himſelf, as dreading my taking an advantage of his weakneſs to uſe him ill, laughed at his own paſſion, and ſeeming to triumph over it, turned it into ridicule, with a vivacity accompanied with abundance of wit and humour. In ſhort, he is the moſt ſprightly unaffected creature you ever beheld; for even affectation in him muſt loſe it's name; every thing is natural, genteel, and eaſy.

But I had not been long in his company, when my aunt, fancying that ſhe might poſſibly be a reſtraint to us both, took an opportunity to leave the room. However, his behaviour was ſtill the ſame; he ſmiled and looked grave; he ſighed and laughed; he ſung a languiſhing ſtrain, the next moment hummed a rigadoon, and capered about the room; but yet it was not difficult to diſcover, that though his temper naturally inclined him to be gay, it would have been now much more eaſy to him, and doubtleſs more pleaſing too, to have aſſumed a behaviour more agreeable to the ſituation of his heart. In ſpite of all his efforts, love ſtill had the maſtery; and methought his ſighs appeared much more genuine than thoſe ſtarts of airy ſprightlineſs under which he endeavoured to conceal them. He would have me conſider him as a lover, though he was unwilling to appear with the languiſhing tenderneſs of one that felt the full power of that paſſion. Yet, in his very attempts to ſhew his liberty, he rattled his chains. I am ſure you would have laughed as heartily at his behaviour as I did; for indeed he is one of the

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moſt odd, fantaſtick, agreeable fellows, that ever aſſumed the tender name of a lover. But as I have given you Lucius's picture, you may expect that I ſhould give you his too: take it then as follows.

He is pretty tall, and of the juſt mean between too fat or too lean; his ſhape is genteel and eaſy; his air, that of a fine gentleman who has ſeen the world; his complexion fair, his forehead large, his eyes briſk and full of fire; his noſe of a moderate ſize; his mouth rather too wide, but rendered agreeable by a conſtant ſmile which ſits on his lips, and dimples in his cheeks; and as to his chin, I aſſure you, it is not leſs regular than any other feature in his face. But I muſt not forget to mention his dreſs, which in this ruſtick part of the country appears very ſingular: every thing about him is of the neweſt faſhion; nor does he want any ornament to ſet off his perſon to advantage. This is an exact portrait of the gay, the janty, the confident Mellifont; and by the deſcription I have already given you of him, you will readily imagine that poor Lucius has a very formidable rival.

After having diverted me for near two hours, with a thouſand agreeable extravagancies, he bid me adieu; but, before he left the houſe, had a private converſation of ſome minutes with my aunt, who, as ſoon as he was gone, came to me; when ſeating herſelf in a chair cloſe to mine, ſhe told me with a ſmile, that the gentleman had been begging her leave to continue his viſits; that ſhe knew him to be of a good family, and poſſeſſed of an eſtate of three thouſand a year; and added, that if he was agreeable to me, and was really as much in love as he pretended, ſhe thought I could not make a better choice. I replied with a good deal of truth, that however diverting his company had been, he had not yet made any impreſſion upon my heart; and that, agreeable as his levity might render him to other women, I could not help thinking that a laſting happineſs muſt be built upon a more ſolid foundation than the airy flights of ſuch a giddy volatile temper. 'I muſt confeſs, 'Madam,' ſaid I, 'that his perſon and 'behaviour would render his addreſſes 'acceptable to the far greater part of our 'ſex, who are perhaps too eaſily pleaſed 'with a gay appearance. His confi-'dence might, in their opinion, appear 'heroick, and carry along with it irre-'ſiſtible charms; but I ſhall never think 'a man has any degree of tenderneſs 'for me, while I have not the power to 'ſoften him too much for him to diſco-'ver all his ſprightlineſs in my preſence.' My aunt ſmiled at this reply; and only anſwered, that ſhe would not adviſe me to any thing contrary to my inclinations; and Amelia and Polly coming in at the ſame time, we dropt the ſubject.

I have nothing further to add, than that I am, my dear Charlotte, your moſt obedient ſervant,

FELICIA.

LETTER XII.

I SHALL not pretend, my dear Charlotte, to decide whether the extraordinary aſſurance of Mellifont, or the diffidence of Lucius, is the moſt excuſable quality; they are both certainly very great foibles when carried to exceſs. But as confidence and folly are nearly allied, ſo modeſty is a weakneſs, if it ſuppreſſes a man's virtue, and hides it from the world; if it fetters his mind, and reſtrains his actions when he deſires to exert himſelf. But if Lucius appears, even upon a ſuperficial view, ſuperior to Mellifont, notwithſtanding the thick ſhade which, inſtead of ſhewing his merit to advantage, obſcures ſome of his brighteſt excellencies, how much more amiable muſt he appear than that gentleman, if it be conſidered that his good qualities are ſet in the moſt glaring and ſtriking light, and that his very follies are ſome of his greateſt perfections!

I told you in my laſt, that Amelia's entering the room put an end to the converſation I had with my aunt upon the merit and fortune of Mellifont; but I forgot to add, that upon our telling my couſin of the viſit I had received from my gay ſpark, I perceived that ſhe changed colour; and immediately her countenance, which at firſt had all the marks of eaſe and good humour, diſcovered the evident ſymptoms of a thoughtful diſturbance; nor ſhould I perhaps have called this circumſtance to mind, which I then took but little notice of, had not her behaviour ſince that time awakened my attention, and quickened my apprehenſion.

Though her temper is naturally rather grave than ſprightly, yet I had always remarked in her a moſt agreeable even-

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neſs of diſpoſition, a flow of ſerene and tranquil ſpirits, which gave an engaging chearfulneſs to her behaviour, and rendered her equally acceptable to others, and happy in herſelf: this was an obſervation that her whole deportment had confirmed ever ſince I knew her; but now that placid ſerenity, which ſweetened our converſation, and greatly enhanced the pleaſures of our mutual friendſhip, ſeemed interrupted; ſhe ſought for opportunities of being alone, and diſcovered a reſerve which I really thought her incapable of. I have had a viſit in form from Mellifont almoſt every day ſince the date of my laſt. He comes in his coach, with a pompous equipage, and dreſſed with as much ſplendor as if he had prepared to appear in the drawing-room on a birth-night; while every viſit ſeems to increaſe poor Amelia's diſcontent and coldneſs to me.

Two days ago, as I was taking a turn in the garden, I found her ſeated in a penſive poſture, in a painted alcove at the end of an alley the moſt obſcure and retired. She ſeemed loſt in thought; and leaning her head upon her hands, with both her elbows fixed upon the table, was doubtleſs indulging ſome ſerious reflections: but, whatever was the ſubject of her contemplations, the ruſtling I made amongſt the leaves of ſome boughs, which for want of cutting croſſed the path, and which rebounded back as I forced my way through them, ſoon made her lift up her eyes; when coming towards me—'My dear,' cried I, 'you will think me, perhaps, guilty 'of ill manners, for being ſo rude as to 'intrude upon your ſolitude: but, no 'matter; my affection for you gives 'me ſome right to your confidence; and 'therefore, in the name of friendſhip, 'I deſire you will either make me as 'grave as yourſelf, or permit me the 'pleaſure of forcing you to partake of 'my gaiety. Come, let me know the 'cauſe of this change—ſome doleful 'ditty! ſome tender tale of love! Come, 'come, out with it.' Here taking hold of her hand, I began to lead her back to the alcove; when turning her head away, with an air of unaffected coldneſs, ſhe gave a deep ſigh, and then begged that I would be ſo kind as to let her go, ſince ſhe was in an ill humour, and was very unwilling to infect me. 'Nay, 'Amelia,' ſaid I, 'I have no right to 'detain you againſt your inclinations; I 'thought I might be ſo happy as to di-'vert you: I hope you will not think an 'unſeaſonable attempt of this kind un-'pardonable.'—'No, my dear,' ſaid ſhe, 'you are extremely obliging; but, 'as I ſhall be but a diſagreeable com-'panion, I chuſe to retire.' At this ſhe left me; when ſtanding ſtill for a moment, to think whither I ſhould ramble, I ſaw her returning. She begged pardon for her ill manners; and, making ſome apologies, aſked at laſt how I liked Mellifont, and what I thought of his addreſſes? I laughed at her queſtion; and readily replied, that I thought him a much more agreeable companion than a lover, 'Nay, my dear Felicia,' ſaid ſhe, with jealouſy in her eyes, 'don't 'diſſemble; are not you charmed with his 'company?'—'Not as a lover, I aſſure 'you,' ſaid I: 'he is indeed one of the 'moſt agreeable impertinents I ever 'beheld. But why this queſtion? 'Have you any private intereſt in view, 'that you aſk it? Come, be frank now; 'and if it will be any ſatisfaction to you, 'I here reſign all pretenſions to his 'heart. I ſhould be very glad of being 'excuſed from the trouble of receiving 'his viſits, though I can't deny but 'there is a pleaſure attends the homage 'of a man of his humour and appear-'ance; they ſoothe our vanity, give us 'an air of importance, and flatter our 'prevailing deſire of making captives.' —'But this is a very ill-natured plea-'ſure,' replied Amelia, with ſome warmth; 'and I thought you had too 'much good ſenſe, as well as huma-'nity, to indulge it at the expence of 'the eaſe and happineſs of a worthy 'gentleman. Beſides, it is dangerous 'ſporting with the tenderneſs of a man 'of ſuch merit; for while you hover 'round the flame, you may poſſibly 'burn your wings.'—'No, never fear 'it,' returned I; 'I am in no danger, I 'aſſure you: but if he will pay his ad-'dreſſes to me, how can I prevent it? 'Am I anſwerable for his folly? I 'have uſed no arts to retain him; and, 'indeed, have been ſo far from in-'dulging my pride at the expence of his 'peace, that I have endeavoured as 'much as poſſible to make him loſe all 'hope of obtaining my affection.' Amelia's countenance now cleared up; a riſing joy ſparkled in her eyes, and gave an agreeable flush to her cheeks; and, in ſhort, ſhe had all that air of eaſe and ſatisfaction

tisfaction which our looks commonly expreſs when we feel our hearts eaſed of a burthen which diſtorts it's tender fibres, and gives us the moſt racking pain: but preſently aſſuming an air of ſoftneſs, ſhe confeſſed, with a low voice, (as if dreading, even in that retired place, a witneſs of her melting paſſion) that ſhe loved the dear engaging Mellifont; but ſhe had no ſooner eaſed her boſom of this important ſecret, than a ruſtick bluſh, with all the marks of a confuſion which ſprings from innocence and artleſs ſimplicity, overſpread her face, and made her hang down her head: but at laſt recovering herſelf, ſhe told me ſhe had ſeen Mellifont a few days before he paid me my firſt viſit; that ſhe was charmed with his perſon, but did not perceive that he had made any extraordinary impreſſion on her heart, till ſhe found that he paid his addreſſes to me; when love, jealouſy, and deſpair, contributed all their force to render her unhappy. She then aſked me, with a ſmile that demanded my confidence, if I was leſs ſenſible of the merit of Lucius than ſhe of Mellifont? and told me, that ſuſpecting it while I was ſick, from the tender things I ſaid of him, ſhe ſent to let Marilla know, that if her brother had a real affection for me, it would be then imprudent to continue his viſits; and that having learnt from her friend the violence of his paſſion, ſhe had uſed all her art to prevent giving him the uneaſineſs he might feel at finding me in the company of his rival. Senſible of the advantages I received from her prudent precaution, and reflecting that my aunt would probably, without her aſſiſtance to keep it ſecret, have been by this time fully convinced of my tenderneſs for Lucius, I returned her my ſincereſt thanks. We then talked of his perfections—delightful ſubject!—in which ſhe ſeemed to ſtrive to outdo me, in giving him the praiſes due to his merit; while the reſerve which for ſeveral days had ſubſiſted between us, now ending in a mutual open confidence, bound us cloſer to each other, by ſhewing her the folly of her groundleſs diſtruſt, and ſtrengthening and enlarging my eſteem for her, who, in the midſt of her jealous fears, took care of my happineſs, and provided againſt the diſcovery of a ſecret, on the concealment of which all my future felicity depended. We embraced with the utmoſt affection, and made reciprocal promiſes of treating each other for the future without diſguiſe, the very appearance of which was now below the dignity of our friendſhip. Our hearts were to lie open, and not the leaſt circumſtance relating to the happineſs of each other concealed. What a pleaſing intercourſe of tender paſſion! All jealouſy being now removed, ſhe ſtrove to increaſe the ardour of my love for Lucius, by relating a thouſand circumſtances in his favour; while her praiſes gave me a delight infinitely ſuperior to any flattery beſtowed upon myſelf. Wrapt up in the ſoft ſatisfaction ſhe gave me, I gratefully returned the obligation, by mentioning all the agreeable things that could juſtly be ſaid of Mellifont, to which ſhe liſtened with equal eagerneſs, and the ſame exceſs of ſoothing pleaſure.

We now walk an hour every day to talk on the ſame ſubject, and I do not believe we either of us find our delight grow leſs by the repetition. Love is an inexhauſtible theme; it furniſhes our converſation with the moſt delicate, refined, and exquiſite ideas; it raiſes us above ourſelves; and not only inſpires an elevation of ſentiment, but gives us a very noble and ſublime manner of expreſſing what it dictates: ſo that were you to hear us on this melting ſubject, you would ſmile at our diction, and the tender cadence of our periods; and be much more ready to take us for a couple of theatrical heroines, rehearſing the parts of two languiſhing princeſſes, than for rural nymphs, unaccuſtomed to high flights and lofty ſtrains, whoſe only perfection conſiſts in being paſtoral lovers. Sometimes we walk for two minutes together in eloquent ſilence; then, after a ſigh or two ſtill more eloquent, we burſt into ſome moving complaint on the ſeverity of Fortune, in making her love a perſon in wealth her ſuperior, and me a youth unbleſt with the advantages I enjoy.

Thus I employ the time of Lucius's abſence, in a way moſt agreeable to that eſteem and affection I ſhall always have for him; while abſence, inſtead of removing the tender ſoftneſs of my heart, renders every thought of him ſtill dearer to me, and preſents him to my mind in every new charm which fancy or love can invent.

But I would not have you imagine, Madam, that we ſpend all our time in theſe uſeleſs lamentations; we have read

novels,

novels, romances, and plays, and have therefore ſome notion of plots and ſtratagems: but I believe we were neither of us formed for intrigue, ſince, with all our induſtry, we cannot yet invent any method to procure me the company of my lover, that will not render us liable to ſuſpicion from my aunt. Beſides, Mellifont is a conſtant interruption to my happineſs by his perpetual viſits; for I cannot reſolve to ſee Lucius at a time when we ſhould be ſo liable to be diſturbed by that intruder's preſence. His company, on this account, grows diſtaſteful to me, and it is with the utmoſt difficulty that I keep within the bounds of good-manners. But I am afraid of diſobliging him, leſt he ſhould acquaint my father with his paſſion, which he would doubtleſs approve; and leſt my refuſing to gratify him in this particular, ſhould offend him ſo much, as to make him croſs me in the deareſt intereſts of my heart. I am, Madam, yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XIII.

MADAM,

NOT the cooling ſhade of ſome friendly bower, the fanning breeze of Zephyrs, or the agreeable freſhneſs of ſome limpid ſtream, could give greater delight to the laborious hind, ſcorched with the meridian ſun's too ardent beams, than I received from the news of your being already joined, by the moſt ſacred bonds, to the gay, the tender Philario. May all your days be propitious! May blooming joys, ever opening with new delight, perpetuate your felicity! May his lordſhip's affection, inſtead of decreaſing with time, ripen into that ſoft eſteem, that tender complacency, which are the natural attendants of love and merit, and the higheſt ſummit of all ſublunary happineſs! In ſhort, may you be bound to him with all that dignity of paſſion which is neceſſary to render him ever as dear to you as now; while love ſhall have the energy of religion, and inclination the force of every ſacred dictate!

You ſee, Madam, what an aukward creature I would have you. To dare to be happy is a thing ſo unfaſhionable, that it may poſſibly require ſome degree of reſolution to withſtand the ſhock of being thought that dull thing called a *fond wife*: but however unpolite it is to have any degree of affection ſubſiſt between thoſe who ought to have the greateſt, you have too much good ſenſe to be aſhamed of what muſt now not only be the eſſence of your happineſs, but your higheſt glory. How ſtrange is it, that a name, a mere ſound, and a ſound, too, to which we have no ſettled meaning, ſhould have ſuch an influence upon mankind, as to make them cancel all the engagements of duty, affection, and happineſs, and even forfeit all their hopes of a bliſsful futurity! What bewitching charm, what dire ſpell, what ſtrange enchantment, is contained in the word *polite*, that it ſhould controul our very paſſions, and make us ſuffer greater pangs of ſelf-denial to become vicious, than would be ſufficient to raiſe us to the higheſt attainments of heroick virtue! To be thought *polite*, how many ladies are contented to be faſhionably miſerable? To be thought *polite*, an old fop, decrepid with years, will keep a miſtreſs, and have the inſolence to boaſt of a thouſand vices, which his years, one would think, exempted him from. To be thought *polite*, a man will contemn the too condeſcending affection of the ſtupid fool his wife, deſpiſe her eaſy virtue, and at the ſame time adore an impudent proſtitute, who tyrannizes over him, and inſults him with impunity; while a lady, for the ſame reaſon, (out of *politeneſs*) will abhor the nauſeous fond wretch her huſband. Thus a confuſed notion of *honour* (another word of the ſame kind, the letters of which I ſuppoſe are a kind of taliſman) will make a coward go trembling to deſtruction, and ruſh with horror into a dreaded eternity!

You will think this a very odd kind of a preamble to be addreſſed to a bride in all the blooming pride of youth and beauty; but, if you conſider that we ought to lay down ſome principles to ſecure the continuance of true felicity, you will not think it an inexcuſable piece of impertinence in me to put you in mind that, if we would enjoy any ſolid happineſs, we muſt be contented to diſſent from the maxims of the greateſt part of mankind. It is certain, that we are governed more by ſound than we are generally willing to imagine. But I might have conſidered, too, that your good ſenſe had undoubtedly directed you to make the ſame obſervation. But, let that be as it will,

I know I am ſecure of your pardon; for you are now in too happy a ſituation to be offended at any thing I can ſay, however common and trifling my thoughts.

To put an end to theſe grave remarks, I come to mine own affairs: and firſt, I ſhall tell you, that I have lately had an interview with Lucius, in which I gave him an opportunity of indulging all the tenderneſs of his heart; a ſatisfaction that was procured me by the kind aſſiſtance of Amelia. Upon hearing, a few days ſince, of the neceſſities of an honeſt but indigent family, about a mile diſtant from my aunt's, I reſolved to pay them a viſit, to indulge ſome of that ſublime pleaſure which it is the greateſt advantage of a large fortune to procure us. Amelia only was acquainted with this viſit; nor did I tell her of it till I was ready to ſet out, when I deſired her to accompany me, to which ſhe inſtantly conſented. We found the unhappy manſion ſituated at the foot of a hill, ſurrounded with ſeveral incloſures of orchards, paſture grounds, and corn fields: at the entrance leading to the door, was a ſhort walk between two elder hedges, which incloſed a ſmall kitchen garden, with ſome ſtacks of hay, and, near the main building, ſome ſtables and barns. But every thing was in profound ſilence; for no human object was near, and nothing to be heard but the warbling ſongs of the airy choriſters, who fluttered amongſt the hedges, or ſat making their reſponſes from the diſtant thorny brakes. The ſolitary ſtillneſs of the place, added to the reflection of the buſineſs in which I was employed, contributed to render me thoughtful, and I could not help giving ſome moments to the conſideration of the various unavoidable miſeries which attend human nature; miſeries which neither virtue nor prudence can always guard againſt. With a mind thus dipped in pity, I could not help heſitating a little when we came to the door; but at laſt rapping ſoftly, we entered the room, where deſpair and ſorrow were painted in the ſtrongeſt colours, and in every face ſuch an undiſſembled ſadneſs, as ſtruck me to the very ſoul: for, notwithſtanding the relief I intended to give them, I could not forbear ſharing in the general grief; and, indeed, it was with ſome pain that I aſſumed an air of eaſe and chearfulneſs, in order to comfort a pretty boy, who ſtood with his eyes fixed upon his mother, and, pulling her by the apron, cried at ſeeing her weep. Two other children, too young to take the ſame notice, were playing about the room. But, wherever I turned my eyes, every thing was in diſorder; nor was it eaſy to croſs the room, or take a chair, for the confuſed heap of litter which was every where ſtrewed about. Alas! the poor woman was in too deep affliction to attend to the management of her family; her mind too much diſcompoſed to attend to order and decorum: for a violent diſtreſs almoſt always renders us inactive; it ſinks and depreſſes the ſpirits; and, when no viſible aſſiſtance is in view, even makes the unhappy incapable of thinking, or uſing their natural abilities, in order to extricate themſelves from the preſſure of their difficulties.

Theſe obſervations, Madam, I have learned from my aunt, and have always found them agreeable to truth. At one of the windows ſat a young man, with deſpair in his eyes, and a look that diſcovered he was grown ſtupid with grief. A book of devotion lay open before him, on which his regards were fixed; but fixed in ſuch a ſteady manner, as ſhewed that he was incapable of reading: he pored on the ſame place, and neither his eyes nor his head moved to take in the compaſs of a line. As ſoon as we entered the room, the good woman aroſe from her chair, and, appearing ſurprized at the ſight of ſtrangers of our appearance, aſked our buſineſs; when taking the little boy in my arms, I wiped away his tears, and kiſſing his pretty roſy cheeks, told him I would wipe away his mother's too, if I was able: at this he ſmiled; when, emptying ſome lumber out of a chair, while the mother made one ready for Amelia, we both ſat down. At a loſs how to introduce the cauſe of our viſit, and willing to oblige them in a way as little painful as poſſible, I ſeemed mighty fond of the little creatures that were playing around me; then turning to the mother, deſired that ſhe would look upon us as her ſincereſt friends, and that we ſhould think it a pleaſure to ſerve her; but ſhe thanked me in a manner that ſhewed that her hopes were at a low ebb, and too far ſunk to be raiſed by glimmering proſpects and airy viſions. However, ſhe called her huſband: but, before he came, Amelia aroſe; and leaving me to comfort the diſtreſſed as my humanity directed, elated with the agreeable

agreeable ſurprize ſhe hoped to give me, went out with the ruſtick youth, and privately diſpatched him to Marilla, to let her know where we were, and that her company, with her brother's, would be acceptable to us both. Mean while the maſter of the houſe, with more firmneſs in his countenance, but with eyes drooping with care, came to us from a back room, and related the cauſe of his misfortunes with that honeſt frankneſs and ſimplicity which always affects the mind, though uttered in the moſt plain and homely language. He told me, that by the exceſſive rains, which had enriched the farmers of the neighbouring hills with ſeveral ſucceſſive years of plenty, he was reduced, from a ſtate of affluence, to penury and indigence; that he ſhould be obliged to ſell the plentiful crop that covered his lands to a vaſt diſadvantage, to ſatisfy his landlord's demands; and that he had no other proſpect than to loſe the fruit of his labours, to be turned out of all his poſſeſſions, and, perhaps, be glad to glean the fields he himſelf had ſown; and all this for want of a ſmall ſum which his landlord had now a particular occaſion for. Willing to ſhorten his uneaſineſs, I here interrupted him, to know what ſum would remove his preſent anxiety; and, as ſoon as he had informed me, I told him, with a ſmile, that I thought myſelf very happy at having it in my power to give joy to an honeſt family; and at the ſame time emptied my purſe upon the table. I now felt my heart overflow with a ſympathetick extaſy, ariſing from the tranſports I myſelf had occaſioned. Thus, with a little gold that has long laid uſeleſs in my cheſt, and for which I have here no uſe, I have procured the happineſs of a whole family, and given myſelf a delight more exquiſite than I ever experienced from the like occaſion; ſince the advantage they have received from it, as they told me, may probably redound to their children's children. What uſe could I poſſibly make of this hoarded pelf, to procure me equal ſatisfaction? Or what is the pleaſure we receive from pride, the gratification of a luxurious appetite, or the indulgence of the higheſt animal delight, compared to this luxury of the mind, the more natural rapture which reſults from the gratifications of our humanity? But while the good people were loading me with their bleſſings, I had the agreeable ſurprize of ſeeing Amelia enter the room, accompanied by Lucius and his ſiſter; for, as they lived but at a ſmall diſtance from the farmer's, ſhe choſe to walk ſoftly after the young man, in order to meet them, and to let them know that I was an entire ſtranger to the viſit ſhe requeſted from them. Seized with a ſudden emotion, my heart fluttered with a painful joy, and throbbed with a ſweet yet tumultuous extaſy. I haſtily aroſe, hardly having the power to ſtay to deſire my old friends to take no notice of what had paſſed; and running to the door, in an eager tranſport embraced Marilla, at the ſame time ſhooting a glance at her dear brother. We went into the orchard together: we talked like friends who had not ſeen each other for a long time, full of ſpirit, full of affection; till at laſt, after having taken two or three turns, Amelia and Marilla told me, with a laugh, that they would leave me for a few minutes; and inſtantly ſtriking off to the moſt diſtant part of the orchard, ſeated themſelves under a tree, and, by their abſence, left room for a more delightful converſation. But though Lucius was now very ſenſible that he was dear to me, he could not enter upon the tender ſubject without confuſion: he at firſt enquired after my health; complained that he was denied the pleaſure of ſeeing me; and then, with a ſigh, let me know how much he thought himſelf obliged to Amelia for procuring him a ſatisfaction he had ſo long languiſhed for. 'But why, Sir,' ſaid I, willing to draw him to an explanation, 'do 'you complain of your being deprived 'of my company; is that ſuch a terri-'ble misfortune?'—'Yes, my dear Fe-'licia,' replied he, trembling, and caſting down his eyes, 'it is an inſupport-'able misfortune. Did you but know, 'Madam, with what anguiſh I ſupport 'your abſence; with what cruel in-'quietudes I count the tedious minutes, 'while my heart'—Here he pauſed, unable to proceed, while every joint quivered with fear; but at laſt reſuming—'while my heart ſtruggles to be 'near you; were you ſenſible of that 'tumult of paſſion, and all thoſe name-'leſs dear ſenſations which fill my breaſt; 'O Felicia! your wonder would ceaſe, and 'you would rather be ſurprized that any 'conſideration could prevent my flying 'to you!' His embarraſſment now ſeemed to increaſe, while he waited for my anſwer; and, indeed, I was going to en-

deavour to rally him on his pretended Platonick friendſhip; to endeavour, I ſay, for I am ſadly afraid I ſhould have made but an odd appearance with my affected gaiety, for my heart was too much ſoftened to permit me to laugh at him; however, one touching glance changed my reſolution, and obliged me to behave more naturally; that is, to thank him for what was ſo perfectly agreeable to me. 'I am obliged 'to you, Sir,' ſaid I, 'for that deep 'concern you expreſs for me; but were 'I more ſenſible that I deſerved it, I 'might give greater credit to what you 'tell me: however, I can do no leſs than 'thank you for your complaiſance.'— 'Ah! Madam,' returned he with more reſolution, while a darting joy fluſhed in his cheek, and in a moment mingled an air of delight amidſt the tender languiſhment of his countenance, 'your 'merit ſufficiently authorizes the ardour 'of my paſſion. I feel the force of 'your charms; they run through my 'heart, and captivate every thought: 'but chiefly that amiable virtue, that 'ſanctity of manners, and all thoſe dear 'unutterable graces, which perpetually 'bloſſom with freſh beauties and un'decaying charms, fill my raviſhed ſoul, 'and inſpire a tender admiration and 'diſtant awe.'

You ſee, Madam, that theſe ſilent lovers (who are ſtruck dumb with a guſh of paſſion too ſoft and powerful to be expreſſed) have their tongues no ſooner unlocked, than they burſt into heroicks, and talk as differently from the polite gentlemen of the more ſtubborn mould, who have language at command, as if they were another ſpecies of beings. Here the heart ſays every thing, and dictates not only the words, but the minuteſt glance, and the leaſt motion: every feature has a voice, and the whole man proclaims the power of love. For my part, I freely confeſs that flattery never appeared half ſo charming as it did now. A ſweet enthuſiaſm poſſeſſed all my ſoul, and I could not help thinking how much better this dear man deſerved a compliment of this kind than myſelf. But the next thought gave a bitter daſh to this exultation of heart, and made me reply, in a mild tone—'You are much to 'blame to entertain ſuch romantick ſen'timents of me, which, I aſſure you, I 'have not vanity enough to think I de'ſerve: but, however, were I ever ſo 'worthy of your eſteem, and tendereſt af'fection, yet the thought that I am not 'at my own diſpoſal, and the difficulty 'you may expect to meet with from my 'father, who has an undoubted right to 'diſpoſe of me, ſhould make you endea'vour to forget me, and conquer a paſſion 'which I fear will prove fatal to your re'poſe.' This anſwer gave an immediate damp to his tranſport, and ſeemed to throw him into a freſh confuſion: however, fixing his eyes upon me, with a languid yet piercing air—'O my dear 'Felicia,' cried he, 'do you indeed 'blame the unconquerable tenderneſs 'of my heart? Would you perſuade me 'to eraſe your lovely image from my 'ſoul? Alas! I am too ſenſible that I 'have no reaſon to flatter myſelf that 'your father will ever favour my aſpir'ing wiſhes; yet, whatever is the con'ſequence, I muſt love you ſtill—I muſt 'ever love you. Nor can I, though ſur'rounded with difficulties that oppoſe 'my happineſs, even wiſh that I loved 'you leſs. But ah! Madam, if you 'deſire that I ſhould forget you, I am 'wretched indeed!'

With what irreſiſtible ſoftneſs were theſe laſt words uttered! His eyes ſwelled with a ſtarting tear, which with conſcious dignity and ſhame he endeavoured to call back, as a mark of a too effeminate weakneſs. Every ſpeaking feature deſcribed the ſtrong emotions which agitated his ſoul with all the torturing agonies that can ariſe from the tendereſt deſpair; while pity and love, and dear compaſſion, ſhot through my heart, and filled all my mind with a virtuous and decent ſoftneſs. I looked upon him; but what did this look tell him? Certainly all that I felt; for my eyes were then incapable of ſpeaking a falſhood. 'O Lucius!' ſaid I, 'need I tell you, 'that I am far from wiſhing it in your 'power to forget me? Yet, methinks, 'if that was neceſſary to your hap'pineſs, I could ſuffer a great deal to 'procure it; and perhaps a conqueſt 'of this kind would not coſt me leſs 'than it would you. Could you but 'procure my father's conſent, we might 'both be happy—but that, I fear, you 'will never obtain. No; neither you 'nor I ought to hope for it. And I 'here proteſt that I will never be yours 'without his approbation. Not even 'your merit, great as it is, ſhall ever 'make me forget that I have a father—

'a kind

'a kind and indulgent father. Never 'ſhall any conſideration prevail with 'me to forfeit my duty to God, or to 'him. This reſolution you will not, 'you cannot condemn.'—'No, my dear 'Felicia,' returned he, with his eyes ſparkling with a languid joy; 'my love 'is too pure to ſuffer me either to in'volve you in your father's diſpleaſure, 'or to tempt you to offend Heaven: ſo 'far from laying ſnares for your virtue 'and honour, I would die in their de'fence, and ſacrifice all that is dear to 'me to preſerve them inviolate. But, 'O what tranſporting goodneſs! Do 'you indeed love me? Is it poſſible? 'Help me to ſupport the rapture of this 'extatick thought—or rather teach me 'how to merit your father's favour. 'What means would I not employ to 'obtain it! Sure, if he is ſuch a tender 'father as you deſcribe him, he muſt 'have ſome regard to your inclinations 'in an affair of ſuch infinite conſequence 'to your happineſs. But, O this diſ'proportion of fortune! that is the ob'ſtacle. And can there be a greater in 'the opinion of a tender parent? Yes, 'ſure, to a wiſe and tender parent there 'may.'

But, Madam, I muſt not forget to mention one circumſtance that I am ſure will make you ſmile. In the height of his rapture he ſeized my hand, and ſqueezing it with a ſtrong and ſudden graſp, hurt my fingers ſo, that I could hardly forbear crying out; I am ſure, if he had obſerved my looks, he would have found that I made moſt frightful faces: he then preſſed it to his lips, and taking it from thence, graſped my poor fingers again with the ſame convulſion of paſſion, ſtill ſlackening the tender preſſure as his thoughts returned to my father; he at laſt held my hand ſo looſe, that my numbed fingers could ſcarcely feel that he held them at all. But a ſhame on my extreme inſenſibility, that gave occaſion to theſe intolerable extaſies! What tender words had I uttered! Dear Madam, let no prudes or coquettes ever read my letters, for I ſhall certainly never be able to ſtand the cenſure of the one, or the raillery of the other. But to proceed.

Melting with the high-wrought rapture which ſeemed to ſublime our ſouls, while it raiſed us to a degree of felicity almoſt too exquiſite to be ſupported, we mutually opened our hearts, and with a confidence of being beloved, reciprocally confeſſed the tender ſenſations that ſwelled our boſoms. All *my* ſoul was delight! a delight pure as the rapture of ætherial ſpirits! *his* tranſporting extaſy!

'Tis not the coarſer tie of human laws,
Unnatural oft, and foreign to the mind,
That binds our peace, but harmony itſelf,
Attuning all our paſſions into love;
Where friendſhip full exerts his ſofteſt power;
Perfect eſteem and ſympathy of ſoul,
Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
With boundleſs confidence: for nought but love
Can anſwer love, and render bliſs ſecure.'

THOMPSON.

But, loſt in this charming intercourſe of ſouls, we forgot that it was time to depart; till my couſin, with an unwelcome intruſion, and more unwelcome meſſage, came to put us in mind that the ſun was ſetting, and that it was time to return home; when with reluctant hearts, after bidding a tender adieu, and embracing Marilla, I tore myſelf from them, and haſted back with Amelia to my aunt.

You, I hope, Madam, will excuſe the weakneſs I ſo freely confeſs to you: ſoftened by the ſcene of diſtreſs I had juſt been a witneſs of, the unexpected preſence of my dear Lucius had probably a much greater effect than it would have had, if my mind had not been thus previouſly intendered. However, nothing can ennoble the ſoul like a virtuous paſſion; it inſpires a thouſand delicacies, a thouſand virtues, which, without it, we ſhould certainly have no idea of.

I am, Madam, with my ſincereſt reſpects to his lordſhip, and my moſt ardent prayers for the continuance of your mutual happineſs, your ladyſhip's moſt obedient ſervant,

FELICIA.

LETTER XIV.

MADAM,

THOUGH your impatience to hear from me is very obliging, yet it lays me under a neceſſity of entertaining you with abundance of impertinences; but if trifles can entertain, you have no reaſon to be diſſatisfied. Wrapt up in obſcurity,

obſcurity, I hear nothing of the fate of princes, or the fall of contending nations. I have now no ambition to enquire after ſuch important events: an humble ſwain engroſſes all my attention, though I hardly ever ſee him. I converſe with few beſides the people of the groves, who (pretty warblers!) are my conſtant companions; yet you would have me inceſſantly writing. Upon my word, Madam, you are quite unreaſonable. I can hardly think it poſſible that a month's ſilence can give you all this impatience. But your friendſhip is an excuſe that I muſt admit. I therefore leave the rooks and daws, which with their harſh diſcordant pipes aid the concert of the warbling linnet, the thruſh, the wood-lark, who, prodigal of harmony, run through their wild variety of notes. Nor ſhall the roſy-breaſted robin, emblem of innocence! the mellow bull-finch, or the dying cadence of the high-ſoaring ſongſter of the ſky, nor all the winged choriſters who chant their loves, and in 'fluttering courtſhip pour 'out their little ſouls in melliſluous 'numbers,' prevent my being impertinent when you command it.

My mind is now in an unaccountable ſituation, ſtrangely divided between hope and fear, and toſſed with a variety of contending paſſions. Still teazed with the addreſſes of Mellifont, his company becomes every day more inſupportable; his vanity grows inſufferable; and the very means he employs to inſinuate himſelf into my eſteem, heightens my averſion. Not that he is really a diſagreeable companion; but while he is a perpetual obſtacle to my ſeeing Lucius, it is no wonder if his gayeſt flights, humorous and diverting as they may appear to others, only ſerve to increaſe my ſpleen and heighten my diſguſt. The conſideration that his unwelcome intruſion deprives me of that dear and ſoftening pleaſure I ſhould otherwiſe enjoy from the cordial glances, and all the pleaſing intercourſes of love that might paſs between Lucius and me, poiſons the ſatisfaction I ſhould otherwiſe receive from his ſprightly airs; airs that have not the leaſt conformity with the tenderly penſive diſpoſition of my mind.

One day laſt week being diſturbed with abundance of gloomy reflections, all turning upon the abſence of my lover, and the oppoſition I expect to meet with from my father, Mellifont glided into the room with a dancing ſtep and his uſual aſſurance, and an affectation of all that eaſe and negligence of behaviour, that can only ſpring from a mind entirely ſatisfied with itſelf. He ſung *Roſy Bowers*, hummed an Italian air, and every minute digreſſed from the ſong, either to make an application to me, or to utter ſome tender thing which intruded upon his thoughts; but every thing was expreſſed with ſuch a mixture of the ſoft and the ridiculous, as would have forced a ſmile from any one that had leſs reaſon to be melancholy. But I was too perverſe to be moved by his fantaſtick behaviour, to ſhew, even by my looks, the leaſt mark of approbation.

Deaf to the muſick of his voice, which is really very harmonious, and untouched by all his arts to charm me, he inſenſibly became more grave; when laying aſide his frolick airs—'Will no'thing ſatisfy you, my charmer,' ſaid he, 'unleſs you ſee me ſighing at your feet? 'Would you have me in dull languiſh'ment admire your beauties, and with 'a heavy ſobbing heart tell you all my 'pain? Well, Madam, I confeſs my'ſelf your ſlave; but at the ſame time 'beg, that, cruel as you are, you will 'not triumph in your conqueſt, and in'ſult over the victim of your charms.'

Here he threw himſelf upon his knee, and taking one of my hands, which he tenderly preſſed in his—'See, my dear,' ſaid he, 'as great a conqueſt as ever 'love has made. In vain I have ſtrug'gled to regain my liberty. All my 'wiſhes center in you; I love you with 'all the paſſionate ſoftneſs that can fill 'a human breaſt: as tenderly as—as— 'Nay, Madam, for Heaven's ſake, don't 'laugh at me,' continued he, ſeeing me ſmile; 'but tell me ſincerely now, don't 'I look very ſilly? I ſigh like the fam'ed knight-errants of old, and like them 'bending before the divine object of my 'ſublimeſt wiſhes, beg, O thou adorable 'fair! that thou wilt mitigate the ſeve'rity of my unhappy deſtiny, or ſuffer 'me to expire at thy feet.' Here making a pauſe, he gently ſunk his head upon my lap; when ſnatching away my hand, and precipitately riſing, he could not prevent his falling upon the floor. Not all my melancholy could now prevent my laughing, had I not endeavoured to hinder it, in order to carry on this comick ſcene. 'Lie there,' cried I, 'thou 'unworthy knight, nor ever more ap-

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Plate II.

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'pear before me, till thou bringeſt me 'the heads of thoſe ſavage monſters that 'infeſt the woods, the trophies of thy 'proweſs and renown.' At this I flung out of the room, as if in a mighty paſſion; and ſtepping into the thickeſt part of the garden, indulged for a few minutes the burſt of laughter which I with difficulty reſtrained till I was out of his hearing.

How dreadfully afraid is poor Mellifont of my abuſing the power I have over him! He was juſt diſſolving in ſoftneſs; but in the moment when he was giving way to his paſſion, and throwing aſide his ſprightlineſs, which was now become unnatural, a ſmile recalled back his fears; his dread of my tyranny returned; and, to prevent my taking advantage of his weakneſs, he was willing to turn all he had ſaid into ridicule.

However, when I began to reflect a little, I could not help being afraid that I had affronted him by my ill-manners in leaving him ſo abruptly; and therefore, having now been near an hour in the garden, and imagining he was gone, returned to my aunt, in order to make my excuſes to her; to whom I fancied he had complained, and who, probably, would blame me for carrying the jeſt too far. But in my way, ſtepping into the room where I had left him upon the floor, I found my doughty knight ſtrutting about with an old ruſty helmet on his head, and in his hand a pike, which ſerved for a ſpear, upon which was fixed the head of a fox, which he had luckily run down the day before. When ſtamping with his foot, his truſty ſquire entered with the ſtuffed ſkins of ſeveral badgers, and other beaſts of prey, the ſpoils of his hall; when Mellifont bending one knee, laid them at my feet, and reſting upon his ſpear—'See, fair 'princeſs,' ſaid he, bowing low his head, 'a knight renowned for acts of 'chivalry, who lays at your divine feet 'the ravagers of the mountains and the 'vallies; but lower ſtill he would lay 'his heart. Incomparable lady, you 'ſee a ſlave whoſe magnanimous arm 'has made theſe horrid monſters trem-'ble; yet his life depends on the radi-'ance of your ſmiles. Soften then with 'pity the beams of your eyes, leſt their 'lightning, with too refulgent glory, 'ſhould burn his ſhrivelled heart to 'cinders.'

This ſet ſpeech, which he uttered with the utmoſt gravity and ſolemnity, he had doubtleſs ſtudied before I entered the room, and which he concluded with bending low to kiſs my feet: when ſtruggling againſt a ſmile, I aſſumed an air of inexorable ſternneſs, and looking down upon him with a lofty ſuperiority and contempt—'Avaunt, caitif 'vile,' cried I, 'and think not to abuſe 'my ears with thy audacious forgeries. 'Are theſe, wretch, the trophies of thy 'valour! Where are the diſtreſſed vir-'gins that thou haſt delivered from the 'poiſonous talons of fiery dragons, or 'the dreadful gripe of monſtrous gi-'ants? Fly, coward, and attempt not 'to abuſe my credulity with the car-'caſes of inſects, or my weak arm ſhall 'chaſtiſe thy temerity!' Here I turned haſtily from him, and walking with a majeſtick ſtatelineſs, ſeated myſelf at the other end of the room, in an eaſy chair, with as much dignity as if it had been a chair of ſtate. But I had no ſooner turned my back, than throwing away his maſking ornaments, he ſtepped up to me, ſinging "Why do you fly, my "deareſt?" and immediately dropping his ſong—'Don't you think, Madam,' cried he, 'that we have acted our parts 'to perfection? Upon my word, you do 'every thing with a grace. Your every 'air is charming. I only am defective; 'for I find I ſhall do no wonders in the 'character of a redoubted champion for 'love; ſince, after all my endeavours, I 'have been ſhamefully degraded, and 'caſt from the dignity of my ſublime 'ſtation. Yet, Madam, you are ſen-'ſible it was in diſguiſe that you made 'me a convert to love. Adorned like 'Flora with all the blooming graces of 'the ſmiling year, and incircled with 'the united fragrance of every opening 'flower, you captivated all my ſenſes, 'and inſtantly made me that odd crea-'ture called a whining, ſighing lover. 'Upon my word, Madam, you could 'not have made a ſtranger metamor-'phoſis had you fixed me a ſtatue.' Here he pauſed; but inſtantly recollecting himſelf—'O Madam,' cried he, ſmiling and rubbing his hands, 'I have 'a lucky thought; permit me to aſſume 'another diſguiſe: as you firſt appeared 'to me a goddeſs, let me for once be 'diſguiſed like a god; you ſhall receive 'me crowned with ivy, and the glow-

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'ing cluſter of the ſwelling vine. In 'this appearance who knows what wonders I may perform! Beſides, can any 'thing better expreſs the felicity that 'would, I am ſure, ariſe from our union, 'than an emblem of that paradiſe, 'where the ſoft beauties of the opening 'year ſhall be blended with the yellow 'fruits of autumn, and all the charms 'of the luxuriant flowing bowl! In 'what exquiſite happineſs ſhall we ſpend 'our days! you ever blooming; I, like 'Bacchus, ever frolick, gay, and 'ſprightly!'

'No, no, Sir,' ſaid I, 'the ſeaſons 'may take their courſe for me; nor will 'I have any thing to do with your 'drunken godſhip. I therefore beg it 'as a favour, that I may not be diſturbed with ſuch fooleries, which are very 'diſagreeable to me.' I had hardly uttered theſe words, when, with the utmoſt ſurprize, I ſaw Lucius and Marilla enter the room; but it was a ſurprize accompanied with delight. I viewed his looks with conſcious innocence, while no ſuſpecting fear dimmed his eyes, nor wan jealouſy diſcoloured his cheek. While I was embracing Marilla, Lucius and Mellifont met each other with the freedom of perſons who had been long acquainted; and turning to me—'I have 'heard,' ſaid he, 'that you are to have 'a little diverſion; and if it is not over, 'would be glad to have a part in it. 'Hail! noble knight,' cried he, clapping Mellifont on the ſhoulder, 'what 'mighty feat of arms is to be done with 'your helmet and lance?' Mellifont ſeemed here a little confuſed, while I began to fear that my lover was acquainted with the paſſion of his rival; but examining again his countenance, my uneaſineſs vaniſhed, for it had not the leaſt tincture of diſorder. But finding that Mellifont made no reply, 'Come, my friend, no evaſions,' rejoined he; 'I met your ſervant an hour 'ago running home with all poſſible 'ſpeed, and in ſuch haſte that he had 'hardly time to tell me the whimſical 'meſſage you had given him, to ſtrip 'your hall of it's grim ornaments, and 'to bring them here with thoſe ruſty 'pieces of ancient heroiſm, your helmet 'and lance. And the lady of this houſe, 'doing my ſiſter and I the honour to 'deſire our company, I came filled with 'the hopes of ſeeing ſome of your diverting extravagancies.'

Here Mellifont, aſſuming a chearful air, began the relation of the odd piece of Quixotiſm which he had carried on with ſuch humour; and my aunt and Amelia coming in, could not help joining with Lucius and Marilla in frequently interrupting him, by burſting into a general laugh; and indeed it was impoſſible for any one in the company to forbear: for though the ſtory was comical enough of itſelf, yet the ſevere manner in which he laſhed himſelf, with the romantick reflections he made upon his diſgrace, rendered it infinitely more extravagant. Nor indeed is it poſſible to give you any idea of this part of our diverſion, except I could give you the varied tone of his voice, his looks, his air, and his minuteſt geſture.

The evening was ſpent with abundance of gaiety, while Lucius's good ſenſe, and Mellifont's agreeable vivacity, furniſhed a great part of our entertainment. Nor were ſome of thoſe ſoft and refined pleaſures wanting, which I now find make up the moſt exquiſite part of human happineſs. 'Tis true, I could not enter into a particular converſation with my lover, much leſs indulge the innocent ſatisfaction of a private interview; but yet I ſat near him, and methought my heart beat in that ſituation much more freely than when he was far diſtant. My ſoul itſelf was all harmony! and, inſpired by his preſence, every vein was harmony too. Strange! that the mind can be ſenſible of ſuch delight from only a conſciouſneſs of a dear object's being near! What magnetick influence, what attractive power, is in the perſon beloved, that from a circumſtance ſo ſmall can inſpire ſuch tender joys, ſuch delicate ſenſibilities of happineſs! 'Tis true, I ſaw him with pleaſure, I heard him with pleaſure too; but yet I had an additional delight, more conſtant and uniform, from my being conſcious that I was near him, which every ſeat farther from him would have ſenſibly decreaſed. You, Madam, can perhaps account for theſe pleaſing emotions; and I deſire you would let me know if you think it unreaſonable, that upon theſe occaſions there ſhould be ſome ſecret ſympathies, ſome dear inexpreſſible ways, by which ſouls expand themſelves towards the dear perſon, and join in a ſoft etherial embrace. I know you will laugh at this whimſical conceit; but no matter. The evening, I ſay,

was

was ſpent agreeably, though we were obliged to be very cautious in our looks, to prevent ſuſpicion; and indeed I was quite ſparing in mine, for I ſeldom indulged the pleaſure of examining his countenance; a precaution that was now abſolutely neceſſary. However, might I frequently enjoy Lucius's company in the ſame manner, I ſhould be more contented; but hardly ever to ſee him, and at the ſame time to have no proſpect of having the difficulties removed which obſtruct this happineſs, I freely confeſs is more than I am well able to bear. I am afraid of having our mutual paſſion diſcovered, I tremble with the moſt dreadful apprehenſions for fear it ſhould come to my father's ears; and yet, without this ſhould be the caſe, it will for ever continue impoſſible for me to taſte any true felicity.

O my dear friend, if my happineſs is really dear to you, give me your advice, and teach me if poſſible to unite my duty to my father with the tender ſentiments I feel for Lucius, and to make them both ſubſervient to the higheſt pleaſure I can enjoy on earth. By what means ſhall I attack my father's heart? By what means ſhall Lucius procure his favour, and make him ſenſible of his merit? To effect this will be a taſk hard and difficult; and to have a ſhare in promoting my happineſs, will be an employment worthy of your friendſhip, and the moſt endearing proof you can poſſibly give me of your eſteem and affection. With the ſincereſt and moſt tender reſpect, I am your ladyſhip's moſt obedient ſervant,

FELICIA.

LETTER XV.

IS it poſſible, Madam, that you can really give me ſuch advice? What, to forget my dear father! to ſteel my heart againſt the ſoft impreſſions of filial duty! to be inſenſible of the ſtrong and tender ties of nature, of the affectionate cares his heart has felt for me, and all thoſe numberleſs inſtances of paternal kindneſs which I have ſo often received from him! Shall I throw a cloud over the flattering proſpects he has raiſed for me, and diſappoint all his fond views for my happineſs, by caſting off that right which nature, and the much more prevailing force of tenderneſs and love, have given him over me! No, Madam, I ſhall never be guilty of ſuch ingratitude. I will never diſpoſe of myſelf without his conſent; nor ſhall all your arguments, how plauſible ſoever, prevail with me to give him a minute's uneaſineſs.

Pardon the freedom with which I reject your propoſal; you never knew what it was to have parents, and therefore can have but faint ideas of that ſolicitude, that unwearied concern, which employ their thoughts; much leſs can you be ſenſible of the unſpeakable obligations I am under to mine, the beſt of parents, and the beſt of fathers! But ſure I am miſtaken: you muſt have very ſtrong ideas of paternal tenderneſs, to ſay, that however offended he may be at firſt, affection will ſoon take place of reſentment, and at laſt ſwallow up all thought of diſpleaſure; when his eyes will be open to the merits of Lucius, and he may poſſibly be brought even to approve of our union; a reconciliation which you kindly promiſe to uſe your utmoſt endeavour to procure for us. But, ah! my dear friend! can I preſume on that affection which makes him dear to me? Can I offend him, from the thought that he is far from deſerving ſuch uſage from me? And can I diſclaim his authority and counſel, from the reflection that he deſerves all my confidence, and my moſt grateful and affectionate regards? No, my dear, you muſt excuſe me, your friendſhip blinds your judgment, and makes you give me advice that you would be far from taking yourſelf, were you in my circumſtances, You would then have conſidered the vexation that muſt ariſe from a diſappointment of the fondeſt hopes; the juſt provocation of ſeeing goodneſs abuſed, and the painful mixture of anger and love, ariſing in the mind of an indulgent father, as the greateſt evils: nor could you, I am ſure, think of being the cauſe of all theſe dreadful perturbations without ſtarting back, and inſtantly recoiling into duty.

Your ladyſhip finds now what a troubleſome perſecution your kindneſs brings upon you: inſtead of acknowledging your goodneſs, and thanking you for the obliging concern you expreſs for my happineſs, I have been haranguing for I dont know how long on my duty to my ever-honoured papa, in order to let you ſee what a good girl

I am. But dont be offended, Madam; I have only been anticipating your own thoughts on the rights of parents. You will ſoon be of my mind; and a few months hence, I hope, will be able to write on this ſubject with a much better grace than I can pretend to do; ſince you will then, it is likely, find abundance of thoſe tender cares, thoſe dear undeſcribable ſolicitudes ariſing in your heart, which I form but a diſtant idea of, from the impreſſions I have received from the paternal affection of one of the beſt of fathers.

The generous pity you expreſs for Mellifont, proceeds undoubtedly from your humanity and natural goodneſs; but I find this pity does not deprive you of the pleaſure of diverting yourſelf with the oddneſs of his behaviour, and the ridiculous manner in which he pays me his addreſſes: but I am going to ſurprize you, by letting you ſee that he is no longer to be pitied, ſince he is in a fair way of regaining his liberty, or at leaſt of falling into a more ſupportable bondage.

If you remember, Madam, I gave you in one of my letters an account of the concealed paſſion Amelia entertained for this gay ſpark of mine; but, hopeleſs as it then appeared, the engaging ſoftneſs of her behaviour, and the natural ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition, added to that eaſy, unaffected freedom, and artleſs innocence, which attends every thing ſhe does, ſeem at length to have made an impreſſion on him. But you could never gueſs from whom I received this news—from Lucius, Madam. He made his rival his confident. And here follows the letter I have juſt received from him on this occaſion.

'LOVELY FELICIA,

'DELIGHTFUL as the reflec-
'tion of your goodneſs is, while
'I indulge the tranſporting remem-
'brance of that charming air with which
'you frankly confeſſed the tender re-
'gard you ſhould always have for my
'happineſs—You love! you return my
'paſſion! what an extatick thought!
'yet it cannot enable me to ſupport the
'tedious delay, the painful abſence, the
'torturing ſuſpenſe, and the pleaſing
'yet dreadful mixture of hope and fear
'with which I wait to know that ſen-
'tence from your father, which muſt
confirm me bleſt beyond expreſſion,
'or throw the thickeſt gloom over all
'my joys. O, my dear, with what
'ardour do I long to ſee you! I have
'a thouſand things to ſay.

'Yeſterday my friend Mellifont came
'to ſee me, with an air more thought-
'ful than ſeemed conſiſtent with his
'ſprightly volatile temper; when our
'friendſhip, which began very early,
'and which, upon his late return from
'the tour of Europe, has been revived
'with all it's warmth, engaged me to
'preſs him to communicate the cauſe
'of his diſcontent. He told me that
'was the deſign of his viſit; and pro-
'poſing our going into my ſtudy, where
'we might be ſecure from interruption,
'began there a ſtory which filled my
'mind with every wild agitation. "It
"is with ſhame," ſaid he, "that I
"confeſs my weakneſs; I love Felicia."
'O what a ſtab did theſe words give
'me! His wealth, his form, his wit,
'his humour, with every qualification
'capable of charming the fair, ruſhed
'upon my mind, and gave me the firſt
'pangs of jealouſy, tormenting paſſion!
'But recollecting that he was certainly
'ignorant of my being his rival, I en-
'deavoured to arm myſelf with patience.
'He then enumerated your ſeveral per-
'fections, and dwelt upon your charms,
'while every commendation increaſed
'my diſquiet. O Madam, can you
'forgive my unjuſt fears? fears inju-
'rious to your honour! But while I
'made the compariſon between him and
'myſelf, how was it poſſible to help be-
'ing alarmed, ſince I myſelf muſt have
'juſtified your choice in rejecting me for
'him? But theſe fears were ſhort-
'lived and tranſient, they ſoon gave way
'to a healing joy which compoſed the
'impetuous tumult of my ſoul; and
'with the utmoſt delight I heard him
'add—"Yet you would admire, Lu-
"cius, to ſee how cold, how inſenſible
"ſhe is of all my endeavours to pleaſe
"her. I meet with nothing but per-
"fect indifference. Her very looks
"ſpeak her inſenſibility. Ah! had ſhe but
"half the winning ſoftneſs, the tender
"graces, of Amelia!—but ſhe is in-
"capable of ſoftneſs. But don't you
"think Amelia pretty near as beauti-
"ful as Felicia? It muſt be confeſſed,
"however, that this lady has a much
"more agreeable temper. What a
"pleaſing air! what a charming
"ſimplicity! Don't you think it would

"pique

" pique Felicia's pride to ſee me change " the object of my homage, and pay " thoſe aſſiduous addreſſes to her cou- " ſin, which ſhe with ſo much ſcorn " contemns? It is a pleaſant thought; " and I am reſolved to puniſh this " haughty beauty, by letting her ſee, " that it is now out of her power to " render me that whining ridiculous " fellow ſhe endeavours to make me. " Tell me now, Lucius; am I not in " the right?"—" They are both ladies " of extraordinary merit," replied I, ' with the utmoſt calmneſs; " but you " ought not to impute Felicia's diſ- " like to a want of natural goodneſs. " Pray, Mellifont, is it ſuch a crime to " be blind to your perfections? She " would doubtleſs approve of you as a " friend, though not as a lover: and I " think I know her well enough to af- " firm that, ſo far from being offended " at your transferring your affections " to her couſin, ſhe will uſe her endea- " vours to promote your mutual feli- " city."—" Do you think ſo?" re- ' turned he; " then I am reſolved to try " the experiment. I have found ſome- " thing ſo engaging in Amelia's beha- " viour, while I paid my addreſſes to " her couſin, that I have long looked " upon her with the higheſt eſteem. " She pleaſes without deſign; and does " the moſt trifling actions with ſuch a " grace, that they forcibly inſinuate " themſelves into the heart. It is, I " am ſure, in her power to make me " happy." I endeavoured to fix this ' reſolution; and, after ſeveral other ' things being ſaid on the ſame ſubject, ' he took leave, with a firm intention of ' transferring all his tender ſentiments ' to Amelia.

' O, my dear Felicia! tell me what I ' muſt think of myſelf for this beha- ' viour? What judgment will you form ' of it? Sure it cannot offend you! ' You are too artleſs to diſſemble either ' with him or me. But, however, I ' beg to ſee you; and, with the moſt af- ' fectionate ardour, intreat you to give ' me an opportunity of expreſſing my ' gratitude, and telling you how much ' I am, deareſt creature! your obliged ' and affectionate ſervant,

' LUCIUS.'

As ſoon as I had read this letter, I left my chamber, and made haſte to communicate it to Amelia, who I did not queſtion would be highly pleaſed with the contents; but, to my no ſmall ſurprize, as well as ſatisfaction, I found her engaged in a cloſe converſation with Mellifont: ſo returning to my apartment, ſcrawled over the above, in order to ſend it away by this night's poſt. I have hardly time now to thank you in form for your many favours; and therefore, with my affectionate prayers for the uninterrupted continuance of your felicity, I in haſte ſubſcribe myſelf, your ladyſhip's moſt obliged friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER XVI.

LAST week, my dear friend, I informed you that the gay and janty Mellifont, finding himſelf unable, with all his airs, to ingratiate himſelf ſo far into my eſteem, as to prevail with me to liſten with pleaſure to his addreſſes, was ſo poor a hero as to change his miſtreſs, and direct his ſmiles and ſighs to Amelia; a thing which, however common in real life, is ſeldom or never heard of in romance: yet this inſtance of his prudence, ſo far from alarming my pride, is a conſtant ſource of ſatisfaction and joy. And if you have yet read over my letter, you muſt have obſerved, too, that I told you I left them together while I wrote you an account of this change in my affairs.

As ſoon as he was gone, Amelia came running to my chamber with her eyes ſparkling with joy, and an air of the utmoſt ſatisfaction. ' What do you think, ' my dear!' cried ſhe, as ſoon as ſhe entered the room; ' the engaging Melli- ' font has been ſaying ſome of the moſt ' agreeable, tender things, to me. O, he ' is a charming man! He came to-day, ' as uſual; when thinking that it was to ' you we owed his viſit, I told him I ' would let you know that he was here, ' at the ſame time turned in order to go ' and ſeek for you, but he prevented me. ' He took hold of my hand, and deſiring ' me to ſtay, ſaid that his buſineſs was ' now with me. I went with him into ' the parlour; when ſeating himſelf by ' me, with ſuch a ſoft look as I have ' ſometimes ſeen him fix upon you—" I " know, Madam," ſaid he, " you will " be ſurprized at what I am going to " ſay to you. Felicia's rigour, and " your charms, have cured my paſſion

" for her. I have been unable to ſup-
" port that lady's conſtant indifference,
" and am not of a temper to indulge a
" ſoftneſs that can be of no ſervice to
" me. I will never be the dupe of
" a girl's vanity, nor whine in doleful
" ditty the diſmal ſtory of deſpairing
" love. I am reſolved to be happy; and
" would have you obſerve, that it is
" out of the power of any of your fair
" ſex to make me miſerable." This,
' Madam,' continued Amelia, ' was to
' prevent my uſing him as you have
' done; for he immediately added ſo
' many agreeable compliments, and ſuch
' ſtrong proteſtations of the ſincerity of
' his love, that I could never be weary
' of hearing him. O he is a charming
' man! This change is happy for us
' both; is it not, Madam? I dare ſay,
' he is perfectly ſincere.'

Here Amelia took time to breathe; for her extaſy had carried her on with ſuch rapidity, that, in the exultation of her heart, ſhe hardly knew how to give a moment's truce to her tranſport. Her whole ſoul overflowed with joy; and it overflowed ſo faſt, that her utterance could hardly keep pace with the ſwift courſe of her ideas. The moſt trifling word had the air of rapture, and every ſentence the dignity of triumph.

However, ſhe no ſooner gave me leave to ſpeak, than embracing her with much affection—' Yes, my dear,' cried I, ſmiling, ' this revolution is happy for us
' both, and I ſincerely congratulate you
' on the conqueſt of a heart that has ſo
' long been dear to you. Lucius has
' loſt a rival that he had reaſon to fear,
' and I have no longer the dread of diſ-
' obliging my father by refuſing to
' marry a gentleman I cannot love; but
' I have yet no proſpect of his ever giv-
' ing Lucius his conſent, that is as far
' off as ever; while you, who yeſterday
' were ready to envy the poor Felicity I
' enjoyed of having my almoſt hopeleſs
' paſſion returned, have in a moment ob-
' tained your wiſhes. My aunt will
' approve your mutual tenderneſs, and
' in a few days cement your happy
' union. How vaſtly is your happineſs
' ſuperior to mine!'—' O, my dear Fe-
' licia!' returned ſhe again, ' can't
' you rejoice with me without theſe bit-
' ter reflections? Expect the ſame de-
' lightful turn in your affairs, and de-
' pend upon my aſſiſtance in procuring
' it. A father's compliance is not ſure
' ſo hard to obtain, when the felicity of
' a dear and only child is at ſtake. Let
' us communicate every thing to Lucius.
' I will engage my mamma, as ſoon as
' poſſible, to take us with her to pay
' his mother and Marilla a viſit. We
' ſhall find him at home. He ſhall know
' he has had a rival, and we will tell him
' the reaſon of it's being kept ſo long a
' ſecret.'—' He knows already the ſtate
' of our affairs,' replied I, ' and had ac-
' quainted me with them before you
' knew your own happineſs. Here are
' a few lines that I received from him
' on this ſubject, juſt after I roſe from
' dinner.'

At this ſhe took the letter out of my hand with an eager ſurprize; her face was covered with a modeſt bluſh, which diſcovered ſome confuſion; and her eyes were in a moment glewed to the paper, which ſeemed to renew her joy. She read it over ſeveral times, and ſeemed to dwell with extaſy on that part which related the converſation between my lover and Mellifont; but at laſt returning it—' This is a proof,' cried ſhe, with a freſh kindling ſatisfaction in her looks, ' that he is ſincere in his profeſſions. It
' is not a raſh haſty fit of diſguſt that
' makes him fly to me: he has exa-
' mined his heart; he conſults his friend;
' he loves me almoſt as well as I do
' him. This authorizes the delight I
' feel, and proves that I have not been
' miſtaken in thinking him ſincere. He
' has fixed his choice, and I ſhall be
' happy!'

Theſe words were inſpired by a tranſport that made her exalt her voice much above her uſual manner of ſpeaking; ſo that my aunt, who was entering the room at the ſame time, heard her very diſtinctly. We both ſaw her in the ſame moment, and both were under ſome confuſion at this unexpected interruption, ſince we could not gueſs how much ſhe had overheard of what we were unwilling to inform her of. However, this diſorder was very ſhort; for ſhe came forwards with a ſmile, accompanied with an air that had not the leaſt mark of diſpleaſure. ' Heigh-day!' cried ſhe, with her eyes alternately fixed upon her daughter and me, ' what is the matter, pray?
' What! all in raptures? May not
' your mother, Amelia, partake of your
' ſatisfaction? I am come to claim a
' ſhare in your confidence, and to de-
' ſire you would let me know Melli-

' font's

'font's buſineſs with you to-day, and 'the ſubſtance of that long converſation 'you had together. Come, be free, my 'dear, and tell me all.'

Here I found that ſhe was ſtill ignorant of Lucius's paſſion; when obſerving that Amelia caſt down her eyes, and, with a viſible diſorder, heſitated how to reply, I inſtantly removed her embarraſſment. 'O Madam,' ſaid I, 'we 'have ſtrange things to tell you! Mel'lifont, finding my heart too flinty to 'be ſoftened by all his endeavours, has 'ſhook off my chains, and ſeeks for 'happineſs from the more gentle diſpo'ſition of Amelia's ſoul. While pay'ing his addreſſes to me, he diſcovered 'a thouſand charms in her; and there'fore, wiſely conſulting his own happineſs, has changed the object of a 'hopeleſs paſſion for one who he has 'reaſon to flatter himſelf will prove 'more favourable; and I dare ſay, Ma'dam, ſince you approved of his being 'your nephew, you will be not leſs 'willing he ſhould be your ſon.'—'No, 'child,' returned ſhe; 'ſo far from hav'ing any objections to him, I freely 'confeſs that I ſhall be proud of his 'alliance. But are you ſure that he is 'ſincere in his pretenſions? Inferior as 'Amelia's fortune will be to his, I 'ſhould highly reſent my daughter's be'ing made a property of. This is per'haps only an artifice by which he hopes 'to awaken your jealouſy.'—'My jea'louſy, Madam!' cried I, with ſome warmth; 'no, he never could have the 'vanity to think it. I dare ſay he is in 'earneſt; and, ſo far from being of'fended at his preferring my couſin to 'me, I rejoice in his change, and look 'upon it with a peculiar ſatisfaction.'—'Well, whatever is his deſign,' rejoined my aunt, 'a little time will diſco'ver it. However, Felicia, I would 'have you believe, that I am not much 'leſs concerned for your happineſs than 'I am for Amelia's: you are both very 'dear to me; but your affections are 'perhaps already engaged.' Here I bluſhed in my turn, which I fancy ſhe took notice of; for, after a ſhort pauſe, ſhe only added—'But it is not my bu'ſineſs to examine you on this ſubject, 'though I ſhould be very glad to have 'a ſhare in your confidence. As for 'you, Amelia, I hope you won't ſcru'ple to diſcover to me the ſituation of 'your heart. You know I am too ten'der a mother not to conſult your in'clinations as well as my own.' Theſe laſt words were expreſſed in a moſt moving tone; while my couſin, who had been hitherto ſilent, could not conceal the riſing tear, which with mute eloquence expreſſed her gratitude, and thanked her for her indulgent goodneſs: when ſtarting up, ſhe ſprung into her arms, and gave her a feeling embrace; which the fond mother, with conſcious happineſs in her looks, returned with equal ardour.

You cannot conceive, Madam, how much I was affected with the goodneſs of the parent, and the confidence which it immediately produced in the mind of the child. Amelia, diſſolved in filial tenderneſs, acknowledged her regard for Mellifont; while my aunt approved her paſſion—approved it with an air of joy, though ſtill doubting the ſincerity of his pretenſions—when, to remove her ſcruples, my couſin promiſed to make her a judge, by giving her an account of his future behaviour.

I was all this while a ſtupid obſerver, and was almoſt aſhamed not to have a ſhare in theſe pleaſing careſſes. 'Do I 'indulge a paſſion,' ſaid I to myſelf, 'that I am afraid of acknowledging to 'a perſon ſo well worthy of all my con'fidence? Will a lady that has ſo much 'conſideration for her daughter as to 'tell her that ſhe is too tender a parent 'not to conſult her child's inclinations 'rather than her own; a woman that is 'ſuch an excellent judge of real merit; 'be inſenſible of the perfections of my 'dear Lucius, and diſapprove of my 'paſſion for ſo valuable, ſo worthy a 'man; one whom ſhe treats with ſo 'much reſpect, and on whoſe virtue, 'ſtrong ſenſe, and other valuable accom'pliſhments, I have heard her make ſo 'many encomiums? I can't believe 'it. She will be pleaſed, too, with my 'confidence, approve my diſcernment, 'and give me her aſſiſtance to work 'upon my father. Well, then, I will 'boldly confeſs my tender ſentiments 'for this engaging youth; and, unter'rified at the ſmallneſs of his eſtate, 'will plead the cauſe of virtue againſt 'that of wealth; I will gain her over 'by my reſpectful confidence, work 'upon her pity, and engage her to give 'us her friendly aſſiſtance, her com'paſſionate and endearing advice.'

This was my final reſolution: but though

though I had no reaſon to prevent my putting it in execution, yet I no ſooner attempted to open my lips upon this too intereſting ſubject, than my courage failed; my heart with ſoft and fluttering timidity rebelled againſt the dictates of reaſon; a thouſand ſcruples inſtantly aroſe; I bluſhed; conſcious ſhame held faſt my tongue; the firſt word died upon my lips; my confidence vaniſhed; and I found the words, *I love*, ſo hard to be uttered, that I was forced in ſpite of myſelf to continue ſilent, and leave unattempted the too ſoftening confeſſion; while all the advantages I ſo reaſonably expected from her aſſiſtance were unable to ſurmount the weakneſs I laboured under. What a painful perplexed ſituation was this! and how hard is it for a virtuous mind to prevent that ſhame, which ought only to accompany vice, from attending the moſt laudable paſſions! The mind, enfeebled by cuſtom, is taught to regard that as a weakneſs which is it's higheſt perfection; nor is it ſtrange that the moſt honourable and decent love ſhould be accompanied with a modeſt reluctant ſhame, ſince we are taught to bluſh at being diſcovered in the practice of the nobleſt and moſt ſublime virtues.

My aunt did not ſtay long: ſoftened by her own affection, and the tenderneſs of her daughter, ſhe left us with all that ſatisfaction in her looks that could ariſe from the contemplation of the felicity of her child; when the perturbation of my mind, occaſioned by the ſtruggle between my diffidence and reaſon, inſenſibly diſperſed, and at laſt left me at leiſure calmly to ſympathiſe in the happineſs of my friends. Hope now gains the aſcendant in my mind; and the indulgence of this good mother makes me flatter myſelf with the ſame from a father, no leſs affectionately concerned for my intereſt.

With my ſincereſt reſpects to his lordſhip, I am, Madam, with all poſſible affection, yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XVII.

MADAM,

IT is not without the appearance of reaſon that you are ſurprized at the unaccountable manner in which we diſpoſe of our hearts; but if we look around us, we ſhall find cauſe to vindicate the grave, the ſedate, and tranquil Amelia, for loving a perſon of a temper ſo widely different from her own. It is not always a reſemblance of ourſelves in temper, any more than in features, that conſtitutes the ſtrongeſt attractive: on the contrary, the thoughtful mind, conſcious of it's own incapacity to render itſelf happy, is naturally charmed with one whoſe airy ſprightlineſs is beſt adapted to give it relief, and vary it's pleaſures by inſpiring the delightful relaxations of the more lively ſocial enjoyments; while the vivacious volatile temper expects the ſame ſatisfaction from the ſagacious and more ſober reflections of ſolid thought and decent prudence. Thus we frequently find that a contraſt of this kind gives a variety which adds a poignancy to their joys, while thoſe whoſe ſouls nature ſeems to have formed in the ſame mould, too often drag on a dull inſipid life, or trifle it away with a mixture of alternate levity and ſpleen. Yet, after all, it muſt be confeſſed, that however various their tempers, it is abſolutely neceſſary there ſhould be a conformity, at leaſt, of paſſion and ſentiment.

Methinks I write now with the gravity of a philoſopher; and that, in accounting for Amelia's tenderneſs for Mellifont, I have very handſomely apologized for that of your trifling friend for the grave and learned Lucius.

Yeſterday being the time we had appointed to pay Marilla's mother a viſit, my aunt, Amelia, and I, ſet out on foot, as ſoon as we had dined, after having given orders for the coach to fetch us back in the evening. The day was exceeding fine; and the air rendered cool and refreſhing by a gentle breeze, which juſt waved the yellow corn, that opening in a narrow path, gave us an eaſy and delightful paſſage; while the bearded ears hung their heavy heads ſurcharged with myriads of glittering pearls, the fruits of a haſty ſhower which, before we had ſet out, had refreſhed the earth, and embalmed the air with a fragrance infinitely more pleaſing than that which ariſes from the powdered toupée of an accompliſhed beau, or the odours which ſcent your ladyſhip's gloves. A thouſand clouds with intermingled gold and purple, of various lights and ſhades, adorned the wide, the blue expanſe, or dimmed the too ardent rays of the dazzling

zling ſun; while the inſatiate eye greedily ſurveyed the wide-ſtretched plenty, or the diſtant woods embrowned by Autumn, or glowing with a lengthened verdure of various hues. Here friendly chat and innocent gaiety kept up our ſpirits, deluded away the time, and helped to increaſe the tender joy which glowed in my boſom at every thought of my ſpeedily ſeeing Lucius. I ſaw the farmer, to whom I had given ſo ſeaſonable a relief, with honeſt front giving orders to his ſervants. My heart ſprung again with a bounding joy; I found myſelf in the fields I had preſerved in his poſſeſſion, and felt more charms in the great abundance that ſurrounded me, from the reflection of it's contributing to the advancement of an honeſt, though unfortunate family, than the moſt rapacious miſer in viewing his hoarded treaſures. He perceived me; when, with an humble ſcrape and grateful look, he ſilently expreſſed his acknowledgments.

At laſt we arrived at the end of our walk; when, as Marilla had been privately acquainted the night before with our intended viſit, we were ſure to find Lucius at home: they both met us at the gate, accompanied by their mother, where they all with glowing extaſy paid us their compliments, and conducted us into a neat and well-finiſhed parlour. Here we took ſome refreſhment; which being over, Amelia judging by her own heart that I ſhould be glad of an opportunity of a ſeparate converſation, aſked me with a ſmile, if I was not too weary with my walk, to take a turn with her in the garden; while Lucius and Marilla, with a ſparkling intelligent kind of ſatisfaction in their looks, offered their ſervice to accompany us.

Here we had a moſt tender interview; I explained the reaſon of my conduct in concealing from him the addreſſes of Mellifont, and thanked him for the aſſiſtance he had given me in ſparing me the trouble of being any longer teazed by his importunities. We then conſulted how to procure my father's conſent; but had come to no determination, when we were interrupted by my aunt, whom we ſaw coming down the alley to meet us. However, ſhe did not diſcover much ſurprize at ſeeing us together without our companions, who we immediately told her were gone to gather ſome fruit, which indeed was the excuſe they had made uſe of in leaving us: but we had hardly made this apology for their abſence, when we perceived them returning; and my aunt telling us that ſhe was afraid we ſhould fatigue ourſelves too much, deſired we would walk in. We conſented, and immediately followed her.

Sophronia, Lucius's mother, entertained me with all that eaſe and polite freedom which is natural to a well-bred woman; and the part ſhe bore in the converſation ſufficiently diſcovered her good ſenſe, and the delicacy and juſtneſs of her ſentiments, while an air of ſweetneſs gave a grace to every thing ſhe ſaid. We were entertained with ſeveral ſubjects, without the leaſt connection, moſt of which were very trifling; but at laſt, the clergy being mentioned, and ſeveral ſmart ſtories told of the jocoſe manner in which the worthy vicar of a neighbouring pariſh conferred the greateſt benefits, we inſenſibly became intereſted in the ſubject. From the clergy we digreſſed to religion, an eaſy tranſition: when ſome of the errors of Chriſtians, ſanctified by the venerable name of Orthodoxy, were proved inconſiſtent with reaſon, with all our ideas of moral beauty and natural harmony; with all thoſe engaging portraits of the Deity; with the ſwell of humanity which expands our boſoms, refines our ideas, and makes us partake of the divine pleaſures of beneficence and conſcious virtue; with the kindly impreſſion we every where receive from a view of Nature, equally lovely in all her works, and equally conſpiring to an univerſal happineſs; and, in ſhort, with the plaineſt diſcoveries of that revelation which we acknowledge to be divine. 'Man, the nobleſt part of this lower 'creation,' ſaid Lucius, 'is ſunk from 'the dignity of his being, and repreſented as naturally incapable of pleaſing, by his beſt actions, his kind and 'benevolent Maker. What a reflection 'on the divine Artificer! Our very virtues are crimes, and the moſt perfect 'uſe of all our powers merits no other 'reward than eternal damnation! What 'a prepoſterous opinion, to think of 'pleaſing the Creator by degrading his 'works! So far from having any moral 'ſenſe, any in-wrought love of virtue, 'we are,' ſay they, 'formed with a 'thouſand propenſities to vice; and 'there is not a crime which ever was 'committed, but what lurks in the breaſt 'of every man, as he is formed by nature,

'ture, and to which he is particularly 'inclined. If this be the caſe, a manly 'action and a villainous one are ſynony-'mous terms; and to ſay a perſon be-'haves like a man, is to ſay, he is a 'ſodomite, a murderer, a parricide; 'and what, if poſſible, is a greater 'contradiction ſtill, it is to ſay, that he 'is to the laſt degree penurious and ex-'travagant; that he deſtroys himſelf by 'debauchery, and yet pines away for 'want: in ſhort, that he acts from 'vicious principles ſo oppoſite, that they 'muſt neceſſarily deſtroy each other. 'Sentiments that in themſelves are not 'more monſtrous, than inconſiſtent with 'experience, and every dictate of rea-'ſon and common ſenſe. But the be-'neficent Father of the univerſe, whoſe 'invariable goodneſs is infinite and 'boundleſs, has been ſo far from curſing 'his offspring by inſpiring them with 'ſuch baleful envenomed diſpoſitions, 'that he has ſtrongly connected, by the 'very frame of our minds, vice and 'cruelty with hate, ſhame and horror; 'virtue, with a thouſand charms, a 'thouſand lovely attractives. Supreme 'and unrivalled in glory, and glowing 'with a conſcious ſenſe of his own 'matchleſs, unfading felicity, he creates 'to communicate happineſs, and forms 'a wonderous ſcale of beings, widely 'to extend the glorious emanations of 'his goodneſs. He makes it their duty 'to be happy; and the glory of each in-'dividual, like him, to diffuſe happineſs 'around him. He places them in a 'ſtate of trial, with every tender ſocial 'affection in their hearts, to ſtruggle 'with each ſelfiſh thought, and gives a 'ray of his wiſdom to direct in what 'manner to exercise the particular exer-'tions of theſe intendering diſpoſitions. 'What a ſubject for gratitude; for the 'moſt devout, the moſt humble and 'elevated piety! This is the religion of 'Nature; the generous, the friendly 'religion of the Bible: that one invari-'able religion, which will ever be a 'law to every ſpecies of moral and ac-'countable beings, from men up to the 'higheſt order of celeſtial ſpirits.'

'Nor can there be a religion,' I could not help interrupting, 'that gives us 'more exalted ſentiments of the Deity. 'What ſurprizing munificence! The no-'bleſt pleaſures that can ſwell our minds, 'are thoſe which accompany the practice 'of virtue; and yet, exquiſite as theſe 'delights are, they are only a prelude 'to diviner raptures; they refine the ſoul, 'and fit us for that ſtate of being 'where our joys ſhall be unmixed with 'care, and uninterrupted by the ſtrug-'gle of contending paſſions; where 'friendſhip and gratitude ſhall be refined 'into the pureſt extaſies, and every ſo-'cial affection attune the ſoul into the 'moſt perfect harmony! Delightful 'thought! how lovely is the Deity, 'and how worthy of our higheſt eſteem 'and veneration!'

You would have ſmiled, my dear friend, had you ſeen the delight Lucius expreſſed in his countenance at finding my ſentiments ſo agreeable to his own: his eyes, while I was ſpeaking, kindled with unuſual briſkneſs; and tempered the tender ſoftneſs of his glances with an air of the higheſt ſatisfaction.

'But theſe enthuſiaſts,' replied my aunt, 'who from an affectation of hu-'mility have treated their own ſpecies 'with ſuch inſolent reproach, have not 'had more regard to the moſt ſacred ob-'ligations. Can we hear without aſto-'niſhment the charming ties of virtue 'blaſphemed? the foundation of all 'publick and private happineſs treated 'with contempt? Strange indeed, that 'men ſhould be ſo inſenſible of the 'ſtriking graces of a virtuous charac-'ter! that that ſacred law, to which the 'Deity himſelf pays obedience, ſhould 'be loaded with the vileſt reproach even 'from the pulpit! A good-natured 'perſon muſt feel all the humanity of 'his boſom riſe with indignation at the 'impious profanation.'

'However ſurprizing this may ap-'pear,' replied Sophronia, 'yet our 'wonder will in a great meaſure vaniſh, 'if we conſider that the ſame perſons 'diſcard the uſe of reaſon from religion; 'for while this is the caſe, nothing can 'be too abſurd to be embraced: nay, 'abſurdity itſelf,' continued ſhe, 'has 'been made a mark of truth; and peo-'ple have ſtretched their faith ſo far as 'to give their aſſent to what they them-'ſelves acknowledged to be impoſſible. 'What could the utmoſt barbariſm of 'ignorance do more? The Deity, all 'lovely as he is, glowing with every 'virtue, and ſurrounded with the daz-'zling radiance of a heavenly ſmile, is 'repreſented as ſtern and inexorable, 'weak and partial, as pleaſed with idle 'compliments, empty praiſes, and little

'tricks

'tricks of devotion; as ſupreme in fell 'revenge, with relentleſs malevolence, 'conſigning irretrievably, before the 'world began, ninety-nine of every 'hundred of his future offspring to 'eternal horrors, and the utmoſt ex-'treme of agonizing torture; while they, 'the deſtined few, happy favourites! 'triumph in his mercy, and extol this 'ſuperlative inſtance of his paternal good-'neſs and kind partiality.'—'Horrid 'thought!' cried Lucius; 'what a ty-'rant! what a monſter! what a devil! 'Can we form an idea of a being more 'tremendouſly terrible? A harpy, or 'Cerberian monſter, with more enve-'nomed rancour? This is the height of 'dæmoniſm: but let the poor heathen 'howl and tremble before his pagod; 'let the barbarian pollute with human 'blood the altars of his idol; let the ig-'norant mandarin, the bigotted der-'viſe, or Romiſh zealot, wound and 'torment themſelves to pleaſe a being 'who has no exiſtence in nature; or the 'falſely reformed Chriſtian ſtrive to out-'vie the Pagan in the frantick reveries 'of his enthuſiaſm; virtue and har-'mony will ſtill be the ſame; and the 'Almighty, unpolluted by their praiſes, 'will look with pity on the errors of his 'children; they are all the objects of his impartial regard, and equally intitled 'to his favour: for, as Mr. Hill juſtly 'obſerves—

"Briton and Ruſſian differ but in name;
"In Nature's ſenſe all nations are the
'ſame."

'Strange abſurdity!' ſaid I, 'that 'religion ſhould be brought to overturn 'all the obligations of religion! for it 'is incredible that any revelation ſhould 'be thought to be true, which ſuppoſes 'the author of it falſe, malevolent, and 'cruel. But while our prieſts declaim 'againſt morality, it is no great wonder 'that it ſhould be deſpiſed by the laity: 'ſuch gloomy repreſentations of reli-'gion, ſuch contemptible diſcourſes of 'virtue, muſt needs corrupt the minds 'of the multitude, and fix the ſtrongeſt 'prejudices againſt every thing ſacred; 'make our duty looked upon as a bur-'then; and the moſt pleaſing exerciſes 'of grateful piety regarded as an irk-'ſome drudgery.'

Our converſation was here interrupted by a ſervant, who entering with a letter, delivered it to my aunt, at the ſame time telling her, that as it had been left for her juſt before our coachman ſet out, he thought proper to bring it with him. She received it with an air of joy; when breaking it open, and caſting her eyes at the bottom, ſhe told me it came from my father; and a minute after added, with a ſmile and a tone of ſurprize, that he was preparing to take a journey to ſee me. What a ſudden confuſion did this unexpected news give me! The joy that I was ready to receive, was ſuſpended by the ſhock of a riſing apprehenſion, that ſomething extraordinary was the cauſe of this journey. 'Sure,' ſaid I to myſelf, 'he cannot be acquainted 'with our mutual paſſion!' What an alarm did this doubt give me! my heart trembled with a very painful diſorder; and it now flutters in the ſame uneaſy manner, while I acquaint you that I dread to ſee him. But what have I done, that I ſhould be afraid of ſeeing my fa-ther's face? O my dear Lucius! to be deprived of the hopes of living with thee—to ſee thee no more! Oh! I can-not bear to think of it. It was then impoſſible to prevent my apprehenſions from making ſome alteration in my countenance. I endeavoured to conceal them under a look of ſurprize; but, in ſpite of myſelf, that ſurprize had ſome traces of uneaſineſs. I ſtruggled with myſelf in vain; my aunt perceived it; I ſaw ſhe did, and that increaſed my diſ-order; but ſhe had too much good-na-ture to increaſe it ſtill more, by ſeeming to take notice of it. Lucius too had his eyes fixed upon mine, while I perceived that he every moment changed colour, and appeared not leſs alarmed than my-ſelf. However, it was now time to re-tire, and I was ſoon miſtreſs enough of myſelf to take my leave of theſe dear friends with a tolerable good grace.

What will be the ſubject of my next letter I cannot gueſs; my father's pre-ſence will undoubtedly make a conſi-derable alteration in my affairs; and I am now in the utmoſt ſuſpence, yet dread to know the reaſon of his journey. Dear Madam, if you can inform me what I ought to think of it, let me hear from you by the next poſt.

With my ſincereſt reſpects to his lord-ſhip, I am, dear Madam, yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XVIII.

OH, MADAM!

I HAVE ſtrange things to tell you! My father arrived this morning, and has thrown me into ſuch confuſion, that I am hardly able to write to you. I was looking out of my window, bewildered with a mazy crowd of uſeleſs reflections, and had ſtood for ſome time without motion, when I was rouzed from this ſtupid ſituation of mind by a coach and ſix, which drove in a cloud of duſt at a great rate towards our houſe, attended by ſeveral ſervants. I did not ſee them till they were near. They alighted at the gate, and almoſt in the ſame moment I heard my father's voice. Forgetful of my fears, every care was in an inſtant ſwallowed up by duty: my heart glowed with affection. 'It is my 'father! it is my father!' I cried aloud. He lifted up his eyes and ſaw me, when ſtarting from the window, I ran down ſtairs with the utmoſt eagerneſs to embrace him. I met him in the hall. I flew into his arms; when turning from me to avoid my embrace, he deſired me coldly to walk in; but at the ſame time gave a ſigh, and fixed upon me a look which diſcovered how much he ſuffered by this reſtraint. Ah, Madam! you cannot conceive what a ſhock this behaviour gave me. I burſt into tears, and went into the parlour, followed by Amelia.

'Tell me, my dear couſin,' ſaid I, as ſoon as I could ſpeak, 'tell me what 'I ſhall do. How muſt I ſupport my 'father's anger? Do you think now, I 'deſerve to be treated in this manner? 'I can't bear to think of offending him. 'I know it is hard for him to uſe me 'unkindly. But ſure he has no cauſe 'to give me ſuch a cold reception. He 'has heard of my loving Lucius; but 'is that ſuch a crime? Alas! I muſt 'be unhappy, and Lucius muſt be ſo 'too!'

I was interrupted in this bitter complaint, which was intermingled with ſighs and tears, by hearing my father at the door, who entered the room juſt as Amelia was going to endeavour to comfort me. She ſat near me, with her looks fixed upon mine. He ſaw us both in a moving ſituation; and when we lifted up our eyes to his, the mutual tears that for a moment almoſt ſtopped our ſight, trickled down our cheeks, and ſeemed to make a ſtrong impreſſion on his countenance. When turning to my aunt, who ſtood behind him at the door, he told her, he deſired to be a few minutes alone with me. At this Amelia aroſe, and after preſſing my hand with the utmoſt tenderneſs, retired with my aunt.

My father, as if he knew not how to behave, and perhaps wanting time to compoſe his mind, in order to treat me with a ſternneſs ſuitable to the ſubject of his complaint, and which, I dare ſay, he had need of all his reſolution to ſupport, took a few turns about the room, with the appearance of the utmoſt diſorder; but at laſt growing more compoſed, he faſtened the door, and ſeated himſelf by me, giving me a fixed look, which had a mixture of anger and ſenſibility; while I held down my head, drowned in tears, and almoſt ſtifled with my ſighs; and indeed I was ſo intimidated by his preſence, that I hardly durſt lift up a glance, to obſerve his countenance. My heart ached in the moſt painful manner, and ſeemed to ſtruggle to vent it's complaints. At laſt ſeeming to recollect myſelf—'Feli-'cia, it is with ſhame,' ſaid he, in a grave tone, 'that I ſee you the diſgrace 'of my family. Fooliſh girl! what 'could induce you to forfeit your ho-'nour? My fondneſs made me flatter 'myſelf with abundance of pleaſing 'hopes. I have conſidered you as my 'only child, as the picture of your dear 'mother, and you muſt have been ſen-'ſible that my whole happineſs was 'bound up in yours. What, then, un-'grateful creature! could induce you to 'throw off my authority, and to ſuffer 'yourſelf to be ſeduced by an artful, de-'ſigning villain? Alas! is this the 'fruit of that virtue and good ſenſe 'in which I have prided myſelf? Is this 'the effect of that delicacy and inno-'cent wit, in which I weakly fancied 'that you reſembled your dear mother? 'this the reward of all my tender 'cares and pleaſing hopes? But you 'ſhall know that a father's reſentment 'is to be feared. It is ſtill in my power 'to puniſh you; and I aſſure you, the raſ-'cal that has corrupted your innocence, 'and made me an unhappy parent, 'ſhall feel the effects of my rage.'

How was it poſſible, Madam, for me to ſupport ſuch reproaches from a father, whom

whom I had never injured even in thought? To hear Lucius, my dear Lucius, reproached in the coarſeſt epithets! to hear him charged with ſeducing me! to be thought ungrateful! to be regarded as a monſter, who had no ſenſe of honour and duty! my heart roſe with indignation—I could not bear theſe unjuſt reflections. But in the ſame moment, obſerving the agitations of my father's countenance, and reflecting upon what he now ſuffered for me, I diſſolved in affection, and with a precipitation inſpired by a ſudden impulſe of ſoul, threw myſelf at his feet. 'Hear me, 'Sir, hear me,' cried I, with a reſolution inſpired by my innocence, while my eagerneſs to vindicate myſelf filled me with an impatience that made me inſtantly loſe ſight of all that diffidence and reſtraint which had before kept me ſilent; 'let me know of what I am accuſed—in what reſpect I have forfeited my honour? How have I offended you? Tell me, dear father—'tell me in what inſtance I have abuſed 'your goodneſs?'—'Can you aſk *me* 'that queſtion?' returned he in an inexorable tone; 'have I not ſufficient reaſon to be offended? There, read that,' cried he, 'and bluſh to think that you 'dare preſume to impoſe upon me by an 'air of innocence; I know the world 'too well to ſuffer myſelf to be deceived 'by theſe artifices. You will there 'find, that however ſecretly you have 'managed your intrigues, I have been 'but too well acquainted with them.'

Here throwing me a letter, and ariſing haſtily, he walked to the door with an air that ſhewed him not in the leaſt ſoftened at the ſimplicity of my behaviour; when ſtopping ſhort, as if blaming himſelf for leaving me on the floor, he returned with equal ſpeed to help me up. But I aroſe before he came to me; when ſnatching up the letter—'I thought, 'Sir,' cried I, in a reſolute tone, 'that 'I ſhould never be ſo unhappy as to be 'refuſed to be heard by my father; but 'however unkindly you are now pleaſed 'to treat me, it ſhall never make me 'forget my duty.' At this I opened the letter, and he went out of the room. In a few minutes I no longer wondered at his treatment; my whole reſentment was levelled at the wicked author of thoſe malicious lines; and I could not help acquitting my father, and thinking his conduct highly reaſonable, on a ſuppoſition that he believed thoſe vile aſperſions. You yourſelf, Madam, ſhall ſee the letter, that you may judge how groſsly I have been abuſed; and I now tranſcribe it with the utmoſt exactneſs.

'SIR,

'THO i am intyrly unnown to you 'my regard for your onner makes 'me lay before you an afare in wich you 'are partikularly conſarnd tho i muſt 'confeſs i have a uaſt deal of reluktans 'at communikatin the ſecret intreges of 'miſs feliſia for wom I haue a grate af-'fecſhon but you will no all ſooner or 'later i am uery ſorry to tell you that 'unnown to her aunt ſhe kepes com-'pany with a yung gentleman of little 'fortin wen compard with hers but it 'wud give you too much conſarn to ſay 'that her uarty is intirely loſt i hope it 'is not quite ſo bad yet howiuar he has 'don her a ſtill grater ingury by kor-'ruptin her mynd god nos nothing but 'my regard for her cud make me ſend 'you this afliktive neus euery word of 'wich I aſhur you upon my onner is 'ſtrictly treu i wud aduiſe you to ſend 'for her up to toun as priuatly as poſi-'ble her ant loves her as euery body dus 'that nos her and it wud be a ſad aflik-'ſhon to the gud lady to find that ſhe 'ſhud behave ſo badly while under her 'care and as this wud be a conſarn that 'cud do her no gud it wud be better 'not to let her no it i have won more 'thing to ad and that is that however 'gilty you find her you wud treat her 'gently this my affekſhon for her makes 'me beg of you remember ſhe is your 'child ſo concluds your and feliſias ſin-'cere tho' unnown friend.

'P. S. the yung mans father is a 'doun rite lybertin and not wurth a 'graut.'

I am ſure, Madam, your generous concern for my happineſs makes you now feel much the ſame riſings of indignation at reading the vile inſinuations of this ridiculous letter that I did, and therefore I need not particularly deſcribe the various pangs of working antipathy it occaſioned in my boſom What groſs, what infamous reflections! But a heart filled with conſcious innocence is the beſt ſupport againſt ſlander. What little reaſon have we to boaſt of the ſuperior advantages of education, when per-

ſons of the meaneſt attainments can deſtroy our peace, and make ſuch bitter inroads on our happineſs! The ſtupidity and ill-ſpelling of the letter I was ſenſible could not give my father the leaſt reaſon to ſuſpect the ſincerity of the writer, ſince a perſon of the meaneſt ſenſe and moſt illiberal education is equally as good a judge of facts as thoſe who are poſſeſſed of the moſt amiable accompliſhments. And indeed, ſo far from this being an objection, it muſt appear to him as a circumſtance that confirmed the hateful inſinuations it contained; ſince he would naturally ſuppoſe, that a perſon who appeared ſo much beneath me, could have no very particular acquaintance with me, and conſequently could have no intereſt in view in attempting to deceive him. Theſe were ſome of the firſt reflections I made on this part of my misfortunes. 'But who is the 'writer?' ſaid I to myſelf; 'this I am particularly intereſted to know, ſince it is of 'the greateſt importance towards clearing my injured innocence, and regaining my father's eſteem.' At this I fixed my eyes again upon the letter, and fancied it was a woman's hand, while the falſe orthography convinced me that my conjecture was well founded. But then, who had I offended? 'There are none,' ſaid I, 'that I have ſeen here, that I dare 'fix ſuch a baſe ſuſpicion upon; beſides, 'could malice alone ſeek to ruin me, 'without ſome deep-laid ſcheme of 'rankling ſelfiſhneſs? But whoſe happineſs do I oppoſe? I know nobody 'to whoſe felicity I would not contribute. What muſt I think? How can 'I clear myſelf, without being able to 'find out the wicked author of this 'heavy misfortune?'

Thus, Madam, I reaſoned then, and thus I reaſon ſtill; while every reflection, inſtead of giving me the leaſt light into this dark affair, wraps it in a ſtill deeper obſcurity. But, alas! had the whole been as great a falſhood as that part which charges the virtuous Lucius and me with guilt, I ſhould have leſs to fear. My aunt is ignorant of our tender paſſion; I have ſeen him without her knowledge; encouraged his addreſſes without my father's permiſſion; and ſtill love that worthy ſon of an unworthy father, the amiable ſon of an abandoned libertine. How can I confeſs this, without making him ſuſpect that the perſon to whom he owes this information is too well acquainted with my weakneſs to be miſtaken in the leaſt particular? The truth of one circumſtance will give credit to the reſt, and give all too great an air of truth; while my father's opinion that Lucius is the author of my ruin, will root ſo deep a prejudice againſt him, that he will be deaf to all that can be ſaid in his favour, and hardly ever be brought to hear him vindicated with patience.

All theſe reflections paſſed through my mind with the utmoſt precipitation; for, impatient to find ſomething to fix upon that might lead me out of this labyrinth, and teach me how to calm my father's anger, I in an inſtant collected every ſcattered thought, and ſought all around me for ſome pleaſing friendly hope on which I might ſupport my ſpirits, ready to ſink under my father's diſpleaſure: but my ſoul could glance it's eye upon no comfort except it's innocence; and as often as that occurred to my mind, there beamed through it a ray of peace, which preſerved me from ſinking under this heavy load of difficulties. Amidſt theſe various agitations, my thoughts frequently returned to my father, to the almoſt infinite inſtances I have received of his goodneſs. Intendering thoughts! delightful ideas! though now attended with bitterneſs—a ſoothing bitterneſs, that melted my ſoul, and filled my eyes again with freſh flowing tears. But here again my innocence, ſweeteſt comfort of the diſtreſſed! returned again, and made me reflect that I was ſtill as worthy of his indulgent regards as ever. Happy, delightful thought! O virtue! thou nobleſt ſource of fortitude, thou ſweeteſt ſupport of the human mind, how unſpeakable is thy value, and how much more than wretched is the mind that wants thy aids!

Employed in this manner, I ſpent a conſiderable time alone in the parlour, expecting every moment my father's return; for which, however, I was not yet prepared; when at laſt a ſervant came to tell me that dinner was upon table. I had hitherto been too deeply engaged to think of dining, and was therefore unprovided with an excuſe to prevent it, though, in the ſituation I was in, it was natural to feel a great deal of reluctance againſt ſitting at the ſame table with my father; and beſides, the emotions I had ſuffered had entirely taken away my appetite. My mind, yet too diſturbed for company,

company, made me look upon ſolitude as a relief; I therefore ſent word that I was indiſpoſed, and deſired to be excuſed; but the next moment, conſidering that it would appear very ſingular to the family, and perhaps ſet the ſervants upon ſearching for the reaſon of my behaviour, if I alone ſhould be abſent from the table at my father's coming, and that nothing could appear to them ſufficient to excuſe my refuſal; I haſtily wiped my eyes, and arming myſelf with all the courage I could collect, made haſte into the dining-room, in order to overtake the ſervant before he had delivered his meſſage.

I took my ſeat with the reſt, with an air as calm as poſſible, though it is not to be ſuppoſed that my countenance could be entirely diveſted of every trace of uneaſineſs. My father had his eyes continually fixed upon me with an earneſtneſs that alternately expreſſed his anger and pity, while I endeavoured to ſupport his looks with an eaſy humble confidence. My aunt and Amelia regarded us both with a ſilent kind of admiration, and I dare ſay there never was an elegant entertainment paſſed over with fewer words. As ſoon as the deſſert was taken away, I drank my duty to my father: this was the firſt ſyllable that I had ſpoken; and though I had not eat a mouthful, neither my aunt nor couſin had preſſed me to it. They ſaw my diſorder, and did not queſtion my having cauſe for uneaſineſs, ſince my father appeared no more at eaſe than I. I drank, I ſay, my duty to my father; but my heart was too full to ſuffer me to ſpeak it plainly: theſe words trembled on my quivering lips; for my heart ſo ſtrongly felt the force of duty, that it would ſpeak it too; it ſtruggled to ſpeak it; my ſoftneſs would not be reſtrained; a guſh of filial piety ſtarted into my eyes; and the moment I lifted up my hand, hardly knowing what I did, the tears ſtarted, and fell into the glaſs: I then ſet it down untouched. At this circumſtance my father ſeemed greatly affected. My aunt, with tears in her eyes, filled me another glaſs; when looking at her, while the riſing ſwell again almoſt intercepted my ſight—'You wonder, Ma'dam,' cried I, 'at the manner in 'which I welcome my father.' Here ſhe interrupted me, by ordering the ſervant that was in waiting to retire; and he being gone, I continued—'And is 'it not a thing to be wondered at? I 'have not ſeen my father before theſe 'ſix months; that dear father, whoſe 'tenderneſs for me has been too great 'to be expreſſed: but, alas! his mind is 'tainted with the fouleſt ſuſpicions. O 'help me to vindicate my honour, and 'to find out the monſtrous author of 'theſe infamous lyes! I am ſure he 'will be glad to find me innocent; I 'know he will.'

Here I threw the letter upon the table; and, unable to retain any longer the impetuous glut of ſorrow that now aroſe too high to be concealed, I drew out my handkerchief, and hanging down my head, gave free ſcope to my tears. My grief would not now admit of reſtraint, I therefore neither ſtifled my ſighs nor groans; I ſobbed aloud, and every one in the company bore a part in this melancholy entertainment; they all ſympathized with me, and wept without reſerve; even my father could not help joining with the reſt. I lifted up my eyes, ſwimming in tears, and ſaw ſome big drops roll down his awful face; when riſing haſtily, as if he feared being ſoftened too much to be able to retain his rigour, or dreading that he ſhould loſe his judgment in his affection, went out of the room with a countenance that expreſſed more tenderneſs than auſterity.

As ſoon as he was gone, my aunt, taking me by the hand, and laying down the letter—'I have been much ſurprized,' ſaid ſhe, wiping her eyes, 'at my bro'ther's behaviour, and have in vain en'deavoured to find out the cauſe of it; 'he would give me no reaſon for treat'ing you as he has done, but you have 'diſcovered the myſtery. He has been 'informed of your paſſion for Lucius: 'and don't you really love him? I have 'for ſome time ſuſpected it. Come, 'my dear, be ſincere: there is no crime 'in loving a man of his character. You 'need not tell me that you are innocent 'of what is here laid to your charge; 'I am ſatisfied that you are ſo; and 'have too good an opinion of you both, 'to entertain the leaſt ſuſpicion injurious 'to his honour or yours; you are both 'virtuous, and both worthy of my bro'ther's eſteem.'—'Ah, Madam!' cried I, with a reſolution inſpired by my grief, 'will you forgive my injuring your 'goodneſs by concealing it from you? 'This is kind indeed! I do love him, 'tenderly love him, love him even more

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'than myſelf; but indeed, Madam, our 'mutual paſſion has been always regu-'lated by the ſtricteſt virtue; it is an 'innocent paſſion; and I aſſure you, 'that he loves me too well to propoſe 'any ſtep that would diſoblige my fa-'ther; nor would he, great as his love is, 'accept of my hand without his con-'ſent, who alone has a right to diſpoſe 'of me. This I know to be true; he 'has told me ſo himſelf, while I have 'rejoiced in his virtue, and conſidered it 'as a moſt convincing inſtance of the 'purity and ſublimity of his ſoul.'

'I don't queſtion it, my dear,' returned ſhe, preſſing my hand. 'But 'who is the author of this malicious let-'ter? I ſhould be glad to be informed 'of that. But Lucius may poſſibly be 'able to give us ſome light; I will write 'to him to-night, and incloſe this in it: 'mean-while, I will take upon me to clear 'up your virtue, and to give my bro-'ther better ſentiments of this amiable 'young man. But it is fit he ſhould 'appear himſelf: let him be his own 'advocate; he will plead the cauſe of 'his own heart with prevailing elo-'quence.'—'Dear Madam,' cried I, embracing her, 'is it poſſible that you 'can be ſo very good! Do you indeed 'think we ſhall be able to remove the in-'vidious impreſſions that have been 'made upon my father's mind? O how 'happy ſhall I think myſelf, if I can 'but regain his affection! for the un-'eaſineſs he ſuffers on my account is 'more painful to me than all the effects 'of his diſpleaſure.' My aunt embraced me in her turn, and endeavoured to recover my ſpirits by her careſſes; and, in ſhort, having called for a pen and ink, wrote in the following terms to my dear Lucius—

'SIR,

'BY my brother's arrival this morn-'ing, I find that you and Feli-'cia have been much injured; but, to 'remove the pain this news may give 'you, I offer my beſt endeavours to 'undeceive him; nor ſhall my utmoſt 'efforts be wanting to do you juſtice, 'by convincing him that you have a 'mind that ſcorns to be guilty of what 'is laid to your charge in the incloſed 'libel. Let it be your care to find out 'the wicked author, and let us ſee you 'as ſoon as poſſible. Yours, &c.

* * * *.

This note, I ſay, was wrote in the wrapper, ſealed up, and ſent away by a ſervant, who had orders to deliver it into his own hand. You ſee now, Madam, the ſituation of my affairs; I am upon a criſis which muſt determine my future happineſs or miſery. It is true, the ſatisfaction I have received from my aunt's goodneſs is too great to be expreſſed; ſhe has given me hopes which counterbalance my fears; and, in the midſt of all my uneaſineſs, my gratitude and affection for her have ſome charms, ſome engaging ſweets, which will make themſelves felt: but yet, while my father is ſo offended, I muſt have a claim to your pity; and therefore, with the greateſt propriety, ſubſcribe myſelf, your ladyſhip's moſt unhappy ſervant,

FELICIA.

LETTER XIX.

BY the laſt poſt, Madam, I gave you an account of my father's arrival, and of the dreadful turn his preſence made in my affairs; and I imagine that, filled with a friendly impatience, you long to hear whether I have yet ſo far vindicated my honour as to recover his eſteem, or whether I am ſtill oppreſſed with the ſame uneaſineſs I then laboured under. I will therefore make haſte to gratify your curioſity, and repeat my letters, without waiting the return of the poſt for an anſwer; but did you but know how much I need your advice and conſolation, you would be as expeditious in writing as I am.

My dear afflicted father, I told you, unable to withſtand his natural affection, and reſolving to be guided only by the cool dictates of his judgment, was conſtrained, in order to keep a maſtery over his paſſions, to retire for ſome time, to collect his ſpirits; while I took advantage of his abſence to write to you my laſt melancholy epiſtle, which took me up the whole afternoon, having tranſcribed the ridiculous letter I ſent you a copy of while my aunt was writing to Lucius.

In the evening, this good lady had the precaution to order the ſervants not to enter the room, leſt they ſhould be a witneſs of any expreſſions that might ſhock my delicacy for them to hear: a behaviour that ſhewed at once her pru-

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dence and regard for my reputation. Even at ſupper a dumb-waiter ſupplied the place of an attendant, ſo that we were entirely at liberty to enter without reſtraint upon the injuſtice of my father's ſuſpicions; nor could my aunt let ſlip this firſt opportunity of aſſuring him, that, notwithſtanding the malicious letter which had given him ſo much uneaſineſs, ſhe ſtill retained the higheſt opinion of my virtue and diſcretion. 'But, 'to clear Felicia's innocence,' ſaid ſhe, 'it is neceſſary that we ſhould try to find 'out the wicked writer; but as this 'will probably require time, you muſt 'endeavour mean while to diveſt your-'ſelf of prejudices, which may prevent 'your diſcovering the truth. It is not 'whether my niece has placed her affec-'tions upon a perſon of a fortune ſome-'thing inferior to hers that we are now 'to enquire after, but whether it is upon 'an unworthy object; whether ſhe has 'violated her regard for virtue, behaved 'in any inſtance inconſiſtent with a de-'cent modeſty, or had any thoughts of 'diſpoſing of herſelf without your con-'ſent. In ſhort, it is your Felicia's ho-'nour and duty that we are to vindi-'cate; and I don't doubt but we ſhall 'be able to do it to the ſatisfaction of 'any diſintereſted perſon.'—'What, 'then,' returned he, 'would you inſi-'nuate that there is no crime in placing 'her affections upon a man beneath 'her? A very pretty ſtory truly! If ſhe 'has no more regard for my authority 'than privately to favour the addreſſes 'of a worthleſs fellow, what ought I 'to think of her? Is this any inſtance ei-'ther of her duty or modeſty? No, no— 'I am not fit to be conſulted—the old 'fool, her father, would be too ſcrupu-'lous; he would perhaps conſult his 'daughter's honour to the prejudice of 'her inclinations; and it would be time 'enough to ſeek his conſent when it 'will be of no ſervice to him to refuſe 'it.' Severe as theſe words were, the manner of his uttering them added a double ſharpneſs; they touched me in a tender part, and penetrated my very ſoul. What could I do, then, but burſt into tears; into bitter tears, that aroſe from an agony too painful to be endured? Theſe were all the anſwer that I could make him; only, as I roſe to go to bed, I ſobbed out—'Indeed, Sir, your ſu-'ſpicions go to my very heart; but it is 'my ſatisfaction that I don't deſerve 'them. Indeed I have never injured you, 'even in thought.'

You will readily believe that I was too much indiſpoſed to taſte the refreſhing ſweets of ſleep. I was no ſooner laid down, than I began to give way to a whole crowd of painful reflections. I conſidered myſelf as the moſt unhappy creature upon earth, and as worthy of the pity of the meaneſt peaſant. 'My 'father,' ſaid I to myſelf, 'looks upon 'me with ſhame! my dear, my tender 'father, hardens his heart againſt me! 'I have loſt his eſteem, loſt his affec-'tion. Had I ſacrificed my paſſion for 'Lucius to him, I might have made a 'merit of my obedience, and the plea-'ſure he would have received from the 'reflection of my duty would have been 'ſome recompence for the violence I 'ſhould have done myſelf. But I have 'now loſt both my father and my lover. 'What a ſhock to nature! what a vio-'lence to love! Like a wretch the moſt 'deſolate and forlorn, I find myſelf de-'prived of every comfort, of every com-'fort except my innocence. What a 'group of miſeries has this day pro-'duced! When filled with joy at my 'father's preſence, while nature, ſtrug-'gling in my boſom, made me fly to 'his arms, longing to embrace him, 'and eager to welcome him upon his 'arrival; to turn away from me with 'diſdain, to treat me as a guilty cri-'minal, as the diſgrace of his family! O 'my heart! how have I been able to 'ſuſtain the ſhock! What would I 'not give to find out the author of all 'my troubles!—O, my dear Lucius, 'didſt thou but know the agony, the 'diſtraction of my ſoul at this moment, 'how nearly would thy deſpair reſem-'ble mine! Alas! thou wilt know it 'too ſoon! I ſhall never be thine! I 'muſt bid adieu to all the pleaſing pro-'ſpects of happineſs; they are vaniſhed, 'and I ſhall be miſerable!—O my God! 'pity my diſtreſs, and vindicate the 'cauſe of my injured innocence! Thou 'art ſtill my friend; and to thee I can 'appeal as a witneſs of the purity of 'my paſſion, of the ſincerity of my du-'ty, and the integrity of my heart. I 'muſt, I will confide in thy goodneſs.'

In reflections like theſe I ſpent the greateſt part of the night, while ſleep ſeemed to fly from my heavy eye-lids, parched up, and drained of every tear; nor was it till my uſual time of

riſing,

riſing, that, compoſed a little by ſome pious thoughts, I fell into a ſlumber, in which I continued till noon. I then aroſe, extremely indiſpoſed with a violent pain in my head; when Amelia, think-ing the air, which then blew with a pleaſing freſhneſs, might give me ſome relief, engaged me to take a turn in the fields. But I ſhall omit the converſation which paſſed between us, which indeed was as gloomy as poſſible. The thoughts of her own happineſs, ſo ſincere is her affection, could not prevent her bear-ing an engaging part in my afflictions; and though the day is fixed for her union with Mellifont, ſhe ſeemed to ſympathize in my griefs with as real a ſorrow as if her heart likewiſe was devoid of all joy.

Upon my return I found myſelf much more diſordered than when I went out; and therefore, by my aunt's advice, had a light dinner provided for me, and brought into my chamber, where I dined with Amelia; and that being over, was perſuaded to try if ſleep would give me any relief; and indeed, after an hour's repoſe, found the pain in my head much abated. I then went down ſtairs; and enquiring for my aunt, was told that ſhe was in the parlour with my father, and Prudilla, who had juſt come to pay us a viſit. I heſitated at firſt to conſider whe-ther I ſhould join them or not; but con-ſidering that to avoid my father's pre-ſence would only encreaſe his opinion of my guilt, I reſolved, in ſpite of my re-luctance, to bear a part in the con-verſation, or at leaſt to make one of the company.

As ſoon as I entered the parlour, I could not help taking notice of Prudil-la's extraordinary complaiſance; which was the more remarkable, as ſhe had lately treated me, whenever I chanced to ſee her, with a reſerved coldneſs; that made me fancy I had offended her; but now ſhe oppreſſed me with her careſſes, and ſeemed to ſtrive to outdo herſelf by the exceſs of her complaiſance. 'My 'dear,' ſaid ſhe, after enquiring my health, 'I am extremely ſorry to ſee you 'ſo much out of order. Really you are 'more indiſpoſed than you are willing 'to think yourſelf. I am afraid our 'country air don't agree with you. 'Don't you think ſo too, my dear? I 'think you feel a little feveriſh; God 'forbid a relapſe! You are not yet re-'covered of a fever, that had like to 'have proved mortal.'—'I thank you, 'Madam, for your concern for my 'health,' returned I; 'but indeed, I 'have no apprehenſions of that kind. 'Mine is only a ſlight indiſpoſition; a 'pain in my head and lowneſs of ſpirits, 'which I hope will ſoon be removed. 'I am pretty ſubject to theſe diſorders.' —'You have, I think, a very delicate 'conſtitution,' ſhe replied; 'but even 'that is a great mercy, when it has 'ſuch a happy effect as I obſerve it to 'have in you. For a perſon ſo young, 'to have a mind fixed upon a better 'world! to give ſuch early proofs of 'your being one of the elect!—Really, 'Sir,' continued ſhe, 'you are a very 'happy man in being bleſſed with a 'daughter who has ſo much grace and 'piety. Every body here is charmed 'with her behaviour, and I don't think 'there is a perſon living that can give 'her an ill word.'

My father here ſhook his head, and gave a ſigh, and at the ſame time ſmiled with an air that ſeemed to thank her for her good opinion of me. My aunt ſmiled too, but with this difference, that her looks did not expreſs the leaſt de-gree of gratitude; for the ſmile which in my father's countenance diſcovered a ſecret pleaſure, impreſſed only upon hers a ſatyrical caſt. She knew Prudilla; my father was entirely ignorant of her character; and though ſhe could not, as ſhe afterwards told me, dive into her motive for giving me ſuch devout pane-gyricks, yet ſhe could not help thinking there muſt be ſomething at the bottom of all this that ſhe ought to diſcover. She ſhrugged up her ſhoulders with an air of diſtruſt; her eyes ran over each of our faces, as if ſhe ſought to know, by the traces ſhe found there, whether our thoughts were conformable to her own. Mean while Amelia, who ſat next me, jogged me with her elbow, and looking in my face, bit her lips, and ſeemed to ſay—'Obſerve—what egregious flat-'tery!'

'I am glad,' ſaid my father, after a moment's heſitation, 'to hear ſo good an 'account of my daughter: but the opi-'nions of our friends are not always the 'moſt juſt; they are blind to our foibles; 'and thoſe few perfections we have, 'they are ſo complaiſant as to magnify 'much above the truth. But did you 'never, Madam,' continued he, 'hear

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'the leaſt reflection upon Felicia's cha-
'racter?'—'No, Sir, upon my word,
'not a ſyllable, I aſſure you,' ſaid ſhe,
with the utmoſt earneſtneſs; 'there is
'not a perſon living that can give her
'an ill word. She is ſo much beloved,
'that if the conſideration of her health,
'or any other reaſon, ſhould engage you
'to take her with you to town, every
'body that knows her would be ex-
'tremely afflicted. But if her health
'makes it neceſſary, it would be an in-
'jury to her to deſire her ſtay; how-
'ever, we ſhould be extremely ſorry to
'loſe her agreeable, edifying company.'
—'I don't doubt it,' returned my aunt;
'but do you talk of removing her from
'the fragrant breezes of the country to
'the ſmoke of London, for the ſake of
'her health? The doctors are here all
'againſt you; in my opinion, Felicia is
'much better where ſhe is.'—'Nay,'
rejoined my father, 'I have no objection
'to the place. This houſe ſtands in a
'very delightful ſituation; and the bloom
'upon Amelia's countenance is to me a
'ſufficient proof of the purity of the air.'
—'I ſhall not diſpute the point with
'you,' returned Prudilla; 'all conſti-
'tutions, you know, are not alike; and,
'for my part, I am ſo much convinced
'that London would agree better with
'Miſs Felicia, that I could conſent to
'loſe her company for the advantage ſhe
'would receive from it in recovering a
'more perfect ſtate of health. Don't
'you think, Miſs Felicia,' ſaid ſhe in a
fawning tone, 'I ſhould make a con-
'ſiderable ſacrifice in foregoing the
'pleaſure of your converſation purely
'for your advantage? But my good
'friends here don't ſeem to be of my
'opinion. What do you think of it? you
'are the beſt judge; were you not
'ſtronger, more briſk and lively, when
'you lived in town, than you have been
'ſince? I think I heard you ſay you
'were.'—'No, Madam, I never ſaid
'any ſuch thing,' replied I, in a peeviſh
tone, ſurprized at what could be the
reaſon of her deſiring me to return to
London. 'Did not you? I really
'thought you did,' returned ſhe again;
'I am glad to find I was miſtaken; for
'indeed, I deſire nothing more than to
'be bleſſed with the continuance of your
'improving converſation. I was ſay-
't'other day, to a certain lady of my
'acquaintance, that it would be a great
'misfortune to us all to loſe you; "for
"poſitively," ſaid I, "a young lady of
"ſuch a holy and virtuous life is very
"hard to be met with." She was of
'my opinion; and though I don't love
'to praiſe people to their faces, I cannot
'help ſaying, that we talked I don't
'know how long on your piety.'

But I weary both you, Madam, and myſelf, with relating tattle of no conſequence. Hitherto every thing went on ſmoothly. Prudilla had attempted to perſuade my father to take me with him to town; but for what reaſon I could not then imagine: her arguments, however, proved unſucceſsful; when ſeeing me diſcover ſome marks of uneaſineſs, ſhe tried again to cajole me with the moſt ridiculous kind of flattery, which was the leſs inſupportable, as it employed my father's thoughts, and prevented him from entering upon a more painful ſubject. All this while, every thing had the air of myſtery; but her dark deſigns were ſoon to be laid open, when the very praiſes ſhe ſo liberally beſtowed upon me were to turn to her own confuſion. I ſhould have told you, that the ſervant I mentioned in my laſt to have been ſent to Lucius, with orders to deliver the letter, which has been the cauſe of all my ſufferings, into his hand, returned without an anſwer, he not being at home: he was therefore ſent again yeſterday at noon, and returning about three hours after, my aunt was called out to ſpeak to him, juſt at the time when Prudilla was in the midſt of her devoutly fulſome panegyricks, in which I let her proceed without interruption. My aunt's ſtay was very ſhort, for ſhe returned in two minutes after ſhe left us, with a countenance inflamed with anger; her eyes ſparkled with reſentment, and every geſture expreſſed a rage too violent to be reſtrained; when ſitting down for a few minutes, to recover herſelf, ſhe peruſed a letter ſhe had in her hand, while we all kept ſilence, and, big with expectation, ſeemed to wait for the diſcovery of ſome important ſecret. For my part, I knew not what to think; I was unacquainted with the ſervant's being ſent this laſt time to Lucius, for he was diſpatched to him while I was in my chamber. 'Tis true, as I had nothing to reproach myſelf with, I had no reaſon to fear my aunt's reproaches; but yet, as I had already been greatly injured, I could not help dreading ſome farther practices againſt me: I therefore obſerved her be-

haviour, in order to anticipate a diſcovery in which I did not doubt my being concerned; but I had not watched her a minute, before I gueſſed the whole, and thought myſelf able to diſcover the cauſe of thoſe ſtrong emotions which agitated her generous ſoul. She frowned, ſhe bit her lips, ſhe caſt a ſcornful glance at Prudilla, that expreſſed both her anger and ſurprize; and then, with a look of diſguſt, continued reading for half a minute longer; when, as if unable to proceed, ſhe repeated the ſame marks of averſion and aſtoniſhment: at laſt, laying the letter upon the table, and looking at Prudilla—'Did you ever hear, 'Madam,' ſaid ſhe, 'the leaſt reflec-'tion upon Felicia's character? Did you 'ever hear her virtue, her prudence, or 'her reputation, called in queſtion?'—'N—o, n—o, Madam,' returned ſhe, with ſome confuſion; at the ſame time changing colour, while my aunt rivetting her eyes to hers, ſeemed to increaſe her diſorder. 'But why do you aſk me 'that queſtion again?' added ſhe, with a heſitation that ſhewed ſhe was greatly alarmed: 'you don't ſuſpect me of—'of—injuring her ſo much as to ſay 'the contrary?'—'You then ſincerely 'believe her to be perfectly virtuous?' reſumed my aunt. 'Yes, Madam, in-'deed I do,' ſaid ſhe; 'upon my word, 'I do; as virtuous as myſelf.' Here her face, which a moment before was covered with a livid paleneſs, was now all of a flame. 'Yes, and a great deal 'more ſo, Madam,' replied my aunt, 'or I am much miſtaken.'—'What do 'you mean, Madam?' cried Prudilla, riſing, and caſting a glance at the door; 'have you a mind to affront me? A 'great deal more ſo! I proteſt I don't 'underſtand you. A great deal more 'ſo!—A great deal more virtuous than 'I am! Is this the manner in which 'you treat your friends? Somebody 'has told you that I have writ—they 'have told you that—a—I have ſaid 'ſomething to Miſs Felicia's prejudice, 'and you are unwiſe enough to believe 'them; but it is a lye, Madam,' continued ſhe, raiſing her voice; 'an arrant 'lye; as great a falſhood as ever was 'invented. I thought, Madam, you had 'too good an opinion of me to ſuſpect 'my being guil y of ſuch a thing.—But 'ladies, your ſervant—Your ſervant, 'Sir. I ſhall know how to reſent this 'treatment. Ha! mighty pretty! more 'virtuous than I!'

Here ſhe flew to the door in a violent rage; poſſibly to avoid any farther explanations: while Amelia jogged me with her elbow, and whiſpered—'Did 'you obſerve the word *writ?* She had 'like to have confeſſed all at once; ſhe 'knows the contents of the letter; and 'that there is no name ſubſcribed, as well 'as if ſhe had read it this moment. O 'guilt,' continued ſhe, ſhaking her head, 'what a fool doſt thou make of us!' In reply, I only ſmiled, and ſhook my head too. In the mean time, Prudilla was pulling the lock, while ſhe found all her endeavours to open the door prove fruitleſs; for my aunt, in coming in, foreſeeing that it would be difficult to detain her long enough to convince my father of her guilt, had wiſely turned the key, and put it in her pocket.

Prudilla was now enraged almoſt to a degree of madneſs; and turning about, called out aloud—'Open the door, Ma-'dam. By what authority do you pre-'tend to detain me here? Open the door, 'I ſay, or I'll break it open.' She here thundered at it with her feet; while my aunt, ſmiling, cried in a ſoft tone—'Come, come, Madam, ſoftly, ſoftly—'ſoftly—pray don't expoſe yourſelf to 'the deriſion of my ſervants. Pray, 'Madam, be adviſed; this paſſion don't 'become you. Indeed it does not; it 'would almoſt make one ſuſpect you of 'ſomething very bad. Dear Madam, 'be ſo good as to ſit down; you muſt 'not leave us ſo ſoon; upon my word 'we can't part with you yet.' My father all this while ſeemed filled with the greateſt aſtoniſhment; he appeared neither to know how to act, nor what to ſay; however, reflecting at laſt, perhaps, that my aunt muſt have ſome extraordinary reaſon for this change of behaviour to a perſon whom a quarter of an hour before ſhe treated with much politeneſs, he aroſe, and taking Prudilla by the hand, led her to her chair; at the ſame time intreating her to compoſe herſelf. When, ſeeing it was to no purpoſe to make any farther reſiſtance, ſhe peaceably reſumed her ſeat; and fixing her eyes upon the floor, waited with the utmoſt uneaſineſs for what my aunt had farther to add. Her looks were now dejected and melancholy; and it was eaſy to ſee the reluctance ſhe felt at being obliged, in

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ſpite of herſelf, to hear the mortifying things ſhe had reaſon to expect.

'What is the matter?' cried my aunt, ſeeing her ſeated; 'you appear ſtrangely 'diſcompoſed: but, however, I muſt have 'ſome farther diſcourſe with you. You 'have been ſaying abundance of agree-'able things of my dear niece, for 'which ſhe is undoubtedly extremely 'obliged to you; but is ſhe really ſo 'virtuous, pious and diſcreet, as you 'have repreſented her? Pray tell us all 'you know of her'—and then putting on her ſpectacles, and taking the letter to my father out of her pocket, ſhe proceeded in a ſlow, reading tone—'and 'don't ſhew ſuch *a vaſt deal of reluc-'tance at com-mu-ni-cating the ſe-cret 'in-trigues of Miſs* Felicia.'—'I don't 'know what you mean, Madam,' replied ſhe. 'You treat me very un-'worthily, very unlike a gentlewoman.' —'Why, is not this letter yours?' returned my aunt. 'No, Madam,' ſhe replied; 'how ſhould it be mine? I ſcorn 'to uſe any body ill, much leſs Miſs 'Felicia. 'Twas barbarous to ſuſpect 'me of a crime of this nature; but we 'are all liable to be ſlandered.—Miſs 'Felicia,' added ſhe, wiping her eyes, 'why don't you take my part? I have 'often vindicated you on the like oc-'caſion. I could not bear to hear any 'body uſe you ill; 'tis cruel then in 'you to hear me treated ſo monſtrouſly 'on your account.'—'I humbly thank 'you, Madam,' returned I, 'though 'I cannot ſee that you could be put to 'much pains in vindicating my reputa-'tion, when you have never heard, as 'you ſay, the leaſt ill word of me.' This produced a general ſmile; only Amelia, delighted with the thought of ſpeedily ſeeing my innocence cleared up in the preſence of my father, could not forbear indulging the ill-natured pleaſure of encreaſing Prudilla's confuſion, by a triumphant laugh: when my aunt reſumed, with that ſuperiority in her air which conſcious virtue gives over the meanneſs of detected guilt—'Come, 'come, Madam, theſe ſubterfuges and 'low evaſions ſerve only to ſet your 'crimes in a more glaring light: nor 'do I expect to hear any thing elſe but 'ſuch abſurd contradictions, while you 'endeavour to clear yourſelf of thoſe 'baſe and ſcandalous actions which it 'is in my power to prove againſt you. 'This letter, this vile, this infamous 'and malicious letter, which equally 'ſhews the abandoned character and 'ignorance of the writer, is yours; I 'know it is—nor will any thing you 'can ſay perſuade me to believe the con-'trary. 'Tis your hand; and it exactly 'agrees with another I have here, that 'diſcovers the motive of your actions, 'and lays open and naked the wicked-'neſs and deformity of your corrupted 'ſoul. Is it for this you affect to ap-'pear virtuous, to practiſe the blackeſt 'vices with a better grace? to give an 'innocent mind all the diſtreſs, and 'ſhame, and ſorrow, which only a guilty 'one, like yours, ought to ſuffer? To 'eſtrange the affections of an indulgent 'parent from an only child, the delight 'of his life, the object of his deareſt 'hopes and fondeſt wiſhes? To throw 'a damp over all his proſpects of joy, 'by repreſenting her as guilty, as a diſ-'grace and reproach to his name, whom 'he has juſtly admired and loved for her 'virtues? Bluſh, Madam, if you have 'any ſenſe of ſhame, or the leaſt degree 'of that extraordinary modeſty to which 'you make ſuch mighty pretences—'bluſh, and look into yourſelf with 'horror. O my ſtars! for one of your 'years to attempt to delude a young 'man—a very young man—and to at-'tempt to frighten him to a compliance 'with your lewd deſires, by threatening 'to deprive him of his miſtreſs! What 'impudence! And to dare to attempt 'it too!—to attempt it by ſuch baſe me-'thods! But, to finiſh your ſhame, and 'convince my brother, that what I have 'ſaid is but too true, I'll read this vile 'letter.'

Here, putting on her ſpectacles, ſhe began in the ſlow tone of a perſon reading a hand almoſt unintelligible—

'UNKIND LUCIUS,

'IF I deſired to meet you in the dark 'laſt night, it was only to ſave my 'bluſhes. [How modeſt this was! (interrupted Amelia) while my aunt proceeded] Come to-night, and I'll refuſe 'you nothing.'

Prudilla had ſat all this while in a ſtupid kind of amazement, with a countenance on which was painted all the horror, and rage, and mortified dejection, that guilt and unmaſked hypocriſy could give it. Her mouth was open, every feature diſtorted, and her whole

frame trembling and convulſed. She continued unable to ſpeak, unable to interrupt what gave her ſuch pain to hear. But now a ſudden impulſe of ſhame made her ſtart from her ſeat, and ſnatching part of the letter out of my aunt's hand, in a violent paſſion, tore it to pieces, crying—'This is too much, Ma-'dam; nobody could bear it—it is a 'forgery—a curſed forgery.' While my aunt, ſmiling with an air of contempt, caſt her eyes upon a ſmall piece ſhe held faſt in her fingers, which preſenting to my father, he read the following words, which I have now before me—

'fuſe my requeſt or tell
'w to be revenged on your
'acquaint her father with
'Your bluſhin

You are ready now, Madam, to wonder how I could think of giving you this unintelligible fragment, under which was remaining the three firſt letters of her name, for I cannot now be ſuppoſed to be in a diſpoſition to puzzle you with riddles; but, however inſignificant it may appear, it not only ſerved to convince my father that the hand was exactly the ſame as that in which the letter was written that had given us ſo much uneaſineſs, but aſſiſted my aunt in recollecting the whole lines, of which theſe were a part; which ſhe might eaſily do, as it was hardly half an hour ſince ſhe had read the letter entire; and then, indeed, they appeared of the greateſt conſequence, ſince they explained the motive of this dark proceeding.

My father having compared this piece with the letter on the table, returned it to my aunt, who looking at it with attention, after a moment's conſideration, told us, ſhe remembered the lines ran thus—

'BUT if you refuſe my fond re-'queſt, or tell any body what you know 'I would have a ſecret, I know how to 'be revenged on your idol, that you 'doat ſo much upon, and will poſitively 'acquaint her father with every thing 'you would hide from him. Your 'bluſhing, &c.'

'Theſe, I aſſure you,' continued my aunt, 'were exactly her words.'—'O 'monſtrous!' cried Prudilla, throwing away the paper, which ſhe had tore into ſmall pieces; 'monſtrous indeed! what 'vile inſinuations! that I ſhould be ſu-'ſpected of ſuch crimes! But my piety 'and modeſty are too well known for 'any body to believe it. I charged 'with thinking of a fellow! an odious, 'naſty fellow! But I'll ſtill be revenged: 'I will make him ſmart for it. I—that 'never had an indecent thought in my 'life! I think of a filthy fellow! No, 'no, Madam, my reputation for chaſ-'tity is too well eſtabliſhed for any body 'to imagine it. It is a lye; and, for 'what I know, you, Madam, may have 'a hand in it: but I can ſee through 'your plots. This, Sir, is a contriv-'ance between Lucius and your wick-'ed daughter, whom I never ſuſpected 'till this moment; they would be re-'venged becauſe I was enough your 'friend to oppoſe her marrying ſuch a 'villain, ſuch a debauched, lewd vil-'lain. And ſo, having my letter there, 'they muſt needs counterfeit my hand!' Here ſhe forced a ridiculous, affected laugh, and then proceeded—'La! Miſs, 'I did not think you had been ſo cun-'ning. But you ſhall know that my 'character is above cenſure.'

It would be impoſſible, Madam, to deſcribe all the ſtrange contortions, the convulſive geſtures, and affected airs, with which this ſpeech was uttered. She had at firſt the very look of a fury; ſhe grinned, ſhe ſtared, ſhe ſtamped, and walked about the room, fluttering her fan; while her countenance, as well as every action, expreſſed the ſwell of rage, the ſting of conſcious ſhame, and all the mortifying pangs that could diſtort and rack a corrupted heart, aſhamed of being diſcovered, too proud ingenuouſly to confeſs it's guilt, and too much heated by paſſion to attend to the little decorums of her character. But at laſt, thinking, in the heat of her rage, ſhe might throw all upon Lucius and me, and perhaps perſuade my father, at leaſt, that ſhe was ignorant of thoſe crimes which touched her moſt to the quick, ſhe changed her part, and, ſwallowed up by the thoughts of revenge, forgot that by this contradictory behaviour ſhe took the moſt effectual way of deſtroying at once her character, and diſcovering the deformity of her black, abandoned ſoul. But ſhe was incapable of reflection, and, hurried away by a torrent of paſſion, catched at the firſt relief that offered; a relief that made her forget her ſhame, and feel a ſhadowy dawn of triumph,

triumph. Good God! can there be worſe miſeries than thoſe which ariſe from guilt? What deſtruction does it occaſion, while it's very reliefs plunge us into more aggravated wretchedneſs, into deeper horrors!

My father, now unable to contain his indignation, aroſe, and damping the triumphant ſmile, which juſt began to quiver on her countenance, by a ſtern and contemptuous glance—'Madam,' cried he, 'don't think it in your power 'to impoſe upon me by theſe low artifices; I can ſee, through all theſe 'doublings, the weak ſubterfuges of an 'abandoned mind. If my daughter 'has no crimes but what ſuch a vile 'hypocrite as you can reproach her 'with, I ſhall do her the juſtice to think 'her innocent.'

What a beam of joy, at theſe words, ſhot through my ſoul! My aunt now aroſe, and opening the door, cried—'Begone, Madam; for your brother's 'ſake, I ſhall be more tender of your 'reputation than you deſerve, but never 'preſume again to enter into my houſe. 'Go, and bluſh in ſecret—I am ſorry 'that ever I knew you.' Here Prudilla left us, hanging down her head, and muttering ſomething we could not perfectly underſtand.

But I find I muſt break off. When I began this letter, I fancied it would be very ſhort; but I am got, before I am aware, to my uſual length. Sure I muſt be an extravagent lover of writing to ſend you ſuch long epiſtles. The poſt is ready to ſet out, and I have but juſt time to repeat my aſſurances that I am, and ever ſhall be, your ladyſhip's moſt affectionate friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER XX.

AS ſoon, Madam, as Prudilla was gone, elated with the thoughts of what had paſſed, and charmed with the delightful proſpect of a ſpeedy reconciliation with my father, I was going to embrace this favourable moment of throwing myſelf at his feet, and begging to be reſtored to his eſteem; but I no ſooner roſe up, in order to make theſe ſubmiſſions, than, ſtopped by the pride of virtue, I reflected that I had already made too many attempts to ſoften his unjuſt anger; and that, if he was now convinced of my innocence, it did no become me to entreat for what I had a right to demand from him. 'Shall I, like 'a criminal,' ſaid I to myſelf, 'ſupplicate for forgiveneſs? In what have I 'offended? It is for guilt to ſtoop ſo 'low, innocence has no need of ſtooping.' At this thought I ſat down again; and my father and my aunt, ſtill warm with reſentment, being now ſeated too, could not help making ſome reflections on the odious deformity of Prudilla's mind.

'What an abandoned hypocrite!' cried my father, with a look ſtill diſturbed by paſſion; 'what a vile incendiary! But how ridiculouſly inconſiſtent was her conduct! I confeſs I 'am not able to think it, in any inſtance, 'agreeable to common ſenſe; nor can I 'determine which is the moſt remarkable, her folly, or her wickedneſs. 'What a heap of contradictions! 'of abſurd, palpable contradictions!'—'Really Sir,' replied my aunt, 'I cannot think her ſo inconſiſtent with herſelf as you do; her artifices appear to 'me all of a piece. Thinking Felicia 'an obſtacle to her criminal deſires, ſhe 'endeavours to prevail with you to ſend 'for her up to town; you unexpectedly 'come to ſearch into the truth of what 'ſhe had alledged againſt your daughter; when, dreading a diſcovery that 'might prove fatal to her reputation, 'ſhe comes, hoping to clear herſelf of 'ſuſpicion by contradicting every thing 'ſhe had ſaid in the letter; and at the 'ſame time colouring over her artifices 'by the groſſeſt flattery, endeavours to 'perſuade us that our air does not agree 'with her conſtitution; and thus, by a 'concern for her health, and an affectation of the ſtricteſt friendſhip, ſhe 'flattered herſelf with carrying on her 'grand deſign, which is ſtill the removal of your daughter. And, as to 'the reſt of her conduct,' continued my aunt, 'it is eaſy to be accounted for, 'from the ſtrong perturbations of a guilty 'mind, terrified at the thoughts of a 'diſcovery, and therefore in too great 'a ferment to attend to the nice decorums which were neceſſary to carry on 'ſuch a difficult deſign, and too much 'perplexed to ſecure herſelf by the ſubtle 'aids of a ready imagination. She affects to appear a lady of the ſtricteſt 'piety, and moſt unblemiſhed ſanctity 'of life; ſhe is the cenſor of the neigh-

'bourhood;

'bourhood; and not the ſmalleſt fault 'can eſcape her notice: judge, then, how 'hard it muſt be to carry on this diſ-'guiſe when ſo cloſely attacked, and 'how terrible the apprehenſion of being 'ſeen in her true deformity!'

'Right, right,' cried my father; 'ſhe 'is more ſubtle than I imagined; at leaſt 'I ought to think ſo,' added he, in a tender tone, 'in vindication of my too 'eaſy credulity. I have then injured my 'Felicia!' I could hear no more—I flew into his arms; while he, ſeeing my intention, aroſe and ſtepped forwards to receive me. What a delightful, painful moment!

O my dear friend, you cannot conceive even a diſtant idea of half the ſatiſfaction and joy I felt at this inſtant. Something like the voice of nature huſhed my troubled ſoul into a peaceful tranſport, into a rapture leſs tumultuous, though not leſs pleaſing, than that of two meeting lovers. My life ſeemed to run up to it's ſource, and to return back again in a ſweeter and more tranquil ſtream. I embraced my father, as if I had not ſeen him till that moment, as if that was the happy inſtant of his arrival. Every care, every trouble, was then forgot; my preſent joy took up all my thoughts, and all thoſe thoughts were extaſy. My father, having tenderly embraced me, with the affection of a parent who had found a child more than doubly loſt; while nature, riſing in his eyes, ſwelled into a tear, and rolled down his awful cheeks; ſeated me in a chair that was next his own, and taking hold of my hand—'My dear Felicia,' ſaid he, while all the parent guſhed in his eyes, 'I have dearly ſuffered in too 'eaſily believing thee guilty; but canſt 'thou forgive the diſquiet I have given 'thee, and overlook this weak credulity 'that—' 'Dear Sir,' cried I, interrupting him, unable to hold out any longer, and almoſt aſhamed of his condeſcenſion, 'I can't bear to hear you. Is this 'the language of a father to a daughter? No, Sir, it ſhall never be yours 'to me; you oppreſs me too much by 'this unmerited goodneſs. The terrible 'diſquiets we have both felt muſt be 'placed to Prudilla's account. But I 'heartily forgive her; ſhe has been ſuf-'ficiently mortified: we will think of 'her then no more. My conduct, my 'reſignation to your will, ſhall ſuffi-'ciently ſhew how little I deſerve her 'ſlanders. You ſhall know me to be 'dutiful; I will obey you in every 'thing you can deſire.'

Here he preſſed my hand; and, after a ſhort ſilence, turning to my aunt, aſked who the perſon was on whom I had placed my affections? 'He is,' ſaid ſhe, (for here, Madam, I can't help repeating her words, ſhe talked ſo charmingly) 'he is a young gentleman, of 'a family not inferior to ours; but this 'is a trifling circumſtance when compared with his perſonal virtues. He 'has a noble dignity of ſentiment, a 'generous and humane heart, a deli-'cacy of ſoul that renders him equally 'beloved and admired. This, Sir, is 'the character I give of him; and 'I don't queſtion, Sir, but you'll find 'it ſtrictly juſt. If you enquire abroad, 'you will hear too of temperance, affa-'bility, an engaging temper, and, in 'ſhort, of all the virtues you would 'wiſh to ſee in a ſon-in-law.'—'I am 'ſorry to hear it,' returned my father; 'it will then be ſo much the harder for 'my daughter to comply with what I 'have to propoſe to her. I have engaged 'my word to ſolicit her conſent to marry the ſon of one of my moſt intimate 'friends; and have aſſured him, that 'ſhe pays ſo ſtrict an obedience to my 'will, that he need not doubt of my 'ſucceſs. He has a fortune ſuperior to 'hers, a circumſtance that I cannot 'overlook; nor does he want any qua-'lification to entitle him to the charac-'ter of a worthy man, or a gentleman. 'Let me ſee now, Felicia,' added he, addreſſing himſelf to me, 'that you can 'obey my inclinations rather than your 'own; for I will not do you the injury 'to imagine, that you have ſo far en-'gaged yourſelf without my conſent, as 'to be unable to go back.'—'Sir,' replied I, with my eyes fixed on the floor, 'I am all obedience. I never propoſed 'to marry without your approbation; 'but let me at leaſt beg that I may have 'time to conquer my heart, and ſubdue 'my rebellious inclinations. I will 'ſtudy to obey you, and do all in my 'power to render myſelf worthy your 'eſteem.'—'This, my dear,' returned he, 'is all I deſire. It would indeed 'be a ſhock to decency and virtue, as 'well as the greateſt injury to the man 'thou wouldſt endeavour to render happy, wert thou forced into his arms, 'while thy tendereſt affections were

'placed

'placed upon another. But time, and 'the perfections of the gentleman I have 'chosen for thee, will, I hope, make 'that desirable change, which will be 'necessary to compleat the felicity of you 'both.'

Could our happy reconciliation be concluded with a subject more capable of giving a damp to my rising joys, and to the exquisite satisfactions of filial affection! My heart, though dissolved in duty, felt the whole force of the last demand; and at the same instant that I gave up all power over myself, and consented to forsake my dear Lucius, he appeared present to my mind in all his charms, in all the radiant charms of virtue, drooping under his unhappy lot, while the tender languishment of his soul seemed to reproach my too easy compliance. But what could I do? Could I refuse any thing to a father, who had a right to demand every thing from me? No; that was impossible; I was then in a disposition to pay him the most rigorous obedience. Nor indeed could he have made any request that would have given me equal pain to grant: for wealth and splendour, and all the alluring gaieties of life, appear but trifles, when compared with the more important interests of our hearts. Love, in the very instant when I endeavoured to give up the soft, the tender passion, resumed it's empire, and, in spite of all my resolution, flowed in upon my soul, and embittered the generous efforts of my duty; nor could I thus formally resign the extatick thought of spending my life with Lucius, without feeling some of the most cruel pangs. However, endeavouring to collect myself as much as possible, by recalling the pleasing ideas of our reconciliation, I assumed an air of ease and resignation; but as this was a situation very difficult to support long together, and as I found myself still disordered with the pain in my head, I seized the first opportunity of retiring to my chamber; where my supper being brought to me, I went to bed.

I shall not, Madam, attempt to describe the opposite passions I had to struggle with, now I was retired from company, and was at liberty to indulge all the various reflections that intruded themselves upon my mind. It is sufficient to say, that I felt a confused and disturbed mixture of pleasure and pain. But whether the reliefs I found from the consideration of having regained the favour of an indulgent parent, together with the thoughts of the joy he felt at finding me still innocent, were more powerful than all the cause I had for uneasiness; or whether my spirits sinking, under the pleasing flow of those dutiful affections which I had indulged without restraint, made me more heavy than usual; I soon fell into a delightful slumber, which lasted till morning, when I found myself perfectly recovered from every indisposition: but the moment I opened my eyes, the dear idea of my lover returned again to my mind; while I recollected his air, his words, his gestures, the purity of his soul, and the sublimity of his virtues, all had a thousand winning graces; pleasing in the review, yet painful in the idea of their being nothing to me, since I must forget to admire, forget to love this dear engaging man, whom my heart represented as all lovely.

I was in this situation, Madam, when I wrote you my last letter, which I began as soon as I had slipped on my clothes, and which took me up great part of the day in writing; and indeed, though I then filled two sheets of paper with my scribbling, I ought in strict propriety to have carried it thus far. But my adventures come in such swift succession, that I cannot pretend to keep pace with them. I have a very interesting scene to relate; and as I foresee it will take up too much time for me to give it you now entire, I chuse to defer it till my next.

With my most humble respects to his lordship, I am yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XXI.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAD such a variety of painful and agreeable things remaining when I concluded my last, that it was with the extremest reluctance I found myself obliged, either to break off, or to give you such a loose general account of the changes in my affairs, as would be entirely unaffecting; or else, after having raised your curiosity, to break off, and give you the pain of waiting several days in a tedious suspence. But I have now an opportunity of continuing my story, without any of those inconveniences.

The day after that in which I was restored

reſtored to my father's favour, and loſt to the pleaſing joys of love, and all the flattering delights I had formed an idea of, the ſweets of the moſt innocent ſympathies, and the uniform tranſports of a bliſsful union of ſouls; the day after this important one, I ſay, I ſcarcely ſaw my father till the evening: for having, ſoon after I aroſe in the morning, tenderly enquired into the ſtate of my health, he left us to ſpend the day with ſome neighbouring gentlemen. Upon his return we were all ſurprized to find him ruffled and diſturbed by paſſion; and naturally enquiring what was the cauſe of his uneaſineſs, how great was my aſtoniſhment and concern to hear him tell me, that he had received the groſſeſt inſults from Lucius's father! 'Tis true,' ſaid he, 'he was diſordered 'with wine; but it is alſo true too, that 'he has affronted me in the preſence of 'ſeveral gentlemen, in a manner that 'I can't help reſenting. As I had 'given him no cauſe of offence, every 'body took my part; and, as is uſual 'on ſuch occaſions, freely gave me an 'account of the ſeveral debaucheries 'of his life: he is guilty of every ex-'travagance; and is, they tell me, juſt 'upon the brink of ruin. Can I think 'of being allied to ſuch a wretched fa-'mily! No, child, I muſt repeat my 'requeſt, that you would never more 'entertain the leaſt thought of his un-'happy ſon.'

Though I had before hardly any hopes of ever obtaining Lucius, yet I could not hear this repeated injunction without feeling a great addition of pain. My father was now confirmed in his oppoſition to my deſires, and had ſome reaſon to be averſe to our union. Could I then entertain the leaſt diſtant thought of a change in my affairs? I durſt not even think it poſſible. I had not the leaſt glimmering hope of ever being happy, unleſs I could eraſe from my heart the tender impreſſions I found there of my dear Lucius, and that ſeemed as great an impoſſibility as that I ſhould ever obtain him. I was ſo much ſtruck with this thought, that I was hardly able to make an anſwer, and only replied—'I am extremely ſorry for it, Sir; but 'if you knew Lucius, you would be far 'from thinking him guilty of his fa-'ther's crimes, of which he is perfectly 'incapable: but I ſhall ſay no more; I 'will ſtudy to obey you.'

My aunt, perhaps, thinking this an improper time to vindicate my lover, as my father was not a little diſturbed with paſſion, ſeemed to avoid entering into the ſubject. But Melliſont, who, as he was upon the point of being united to Amelia, had been fully let into the ſtate of our affairs, and who was now preſent, could not help vindicating his friend with a warmth that greatly increaſed my eſteem for him, and which I ſaw by Amelia's eyes was not much leſs pleaſing to her; but all he could ſay had but little effect on my father; his moſt forcible arguments could not perſuade him to believe, but that the vices of a parent muſt have ſome effect on the minds of his children. It is true he was not now in a diſpoſition to hear reaſon, eſpecially on a ſubject ſo oppoſite to the tumultuous ſtate of his own mind, which had fixed prepoſſeſſions almoſt unconquerable. But he was ſoon in a better diſpoſition; Lucius himſelf removed all his prejudices, and convinced him of his innocence, and in a happy moment inſpired him with the higheſt eſteem.

The next morning, as I lay longer than uſual, I breakfaſted in bed; a thing very uncommon in this part of the world, where, as I have told you, it is not unuſual for fine ladies to riſe with the ſun. But I had ſcarcely drank my chocolate, when Amelia came running into my chamber, to inform me that Lucius was juſt come, and that he was now in a cloſe converſation with my aunt. Seized with a ſudden flutter and perturbation of ſpirits, I leaped out of bed, and ſlipped on my cloaths with as much ſpeed as poſſible, at the ſame time aſking her abundance of queſtions all in a breath; as whether he had ſeen my father? if he had informed him who he was? what paſſed between them? and ſeveral other things I was deſirous of knowing: and ſo great was my impatience to be informed of theſe particulars, that I could hardly ſtay for an anſwer; I would be informed of every thing at once, and was almoſt angry at her making me loſe the time of aſking her. And was not this eagerneſs very natural, Madam? Indeed I could not help it; I acted merely from inſtinct. It was my heart that wanted to be informed; and the ſtrange emotion I felt there cauſed ſuch a ſwift ſucceſſion of ideas, that every moment's delay ſeemed an age. Amelia talks with as much fluency as moſt people I ever

ever converſed with, yet I thought ſhe dreamed out her ſyllables to an unnatural length; and though I was never dreſſed ſo quick in my life, I could not be perſuaded that I ever was half ſo long about it. But I do not conſider, that while I am deſcribing my own impatience, I am ſtill increaſing yours. She told me that my father, not knowing who he was, had behaved with the politeneſs due to a ſtranger; and upon my aunt's ſaying he was one of her beſt friends, had even gone ſo far as to tell him, that he ſhould be glad of the honour of his acquaintance; and that it would be a particular favour, if, now he was there, he would give him a few hours of his company.

'What a happy omen!' cried I. 'Is 'it poſſible? Are you ſure he ſaid ſo? 'Well, and what elſe? Come, quick, 'my dear.' With what an extaſy were theſe words uttered! 'What elſe, Ma-'dam,' returned ſhe; 'what ſhould he 'ſay elſe? He ſaid nothing more, I 'aſſure you. You will eaſily imagine 'that Lucius accepted the propoſal.'— 'Well, but my dear Amelia,' returned I, with the ſame rapidity, 'are you ſure 'you have told me all? Come, begin 'again, and don't forget the leaſt parti-'cular.' Here Amelia, with a ſmile, did as I deſired; only adding, that my father ſeemed agreeably ſurprized at Lucius's graceful manner of expreſſing himſelf. 'Did he?' cried I, with a freſh tranſport; 'how could you forget ſuch a 'charming circumſtance? But what, 'then, were Lucius's words?'

Thus I employed my time till I was ready to go down ſtairs; when reflecting that what I had conſidered as a ſubject of joy was but an airy viſion, a deluſion of fancy, ſince the eaſe and politeneſs of my father's behaviour to Lucius proceeded only from his not knowing him, my fears now returned with double weight, while my heart ached and fluttered with a painful palpitation, which increaſed at every ſtep I took as I drew nearer my father and my lover. 'In what a terri-'ble ſuſpence,' thought I, 'is poor Lu-'cius! How will he be able to make 'the important diſcovery? Important!' thought I again; 'how is it important, 'ſince it will only raiſe my father's re-'ſentment?' And the next moment I imagined I ſaw him pale and trembling at hearing my father's ſtern command to forbear his addreſſes. But theſe torturing reflections were in a great meaſure put an end to by my entering the room, where Lucius, my father, and my aunt, were in full converſation on ſome indifferent ſubjects. Lucius, the moment he ſaw me, roſe with a bluſh, and bowing low, ſeated himſelf again, and continued the converſation. What a ſtrange concourſe of wild and incoherent ideas now diſtracted my heart! My ſoul, filled with a confuſed agony, was ſcarcely able to attend to any diſtinct ſenſations; I was bewildered in a maze of thought. What a ſtrange ſituation of mind! 'Is this the laſt time,' ſaid I to myſelf, with a ſigh, as ſoon as I was capable of giving the leaſt order to my ideas, 'the laſt, the very laſt time, of my 'ſeeing this dear man? the laſt time that 'I ſhall hear his voice? that voice that 'has ſo often awakened all the powers of 'my ſoul to harmony and love! that 'voice which I have ſo often heard with 'rapture, while, as if all ear, I have hung 'upon his lips, and liſtened to the ten-'der, melodious accents of his tongue! 'O how ſhall I ſupport his abſence! 'how tear myſelf from this dear perſon 'for ever! Never more to converſe 'with my fellow mind, never more to 'hear and ſee his heart ſpeak to me! To 'forget him; to forget the dear ſympa-'thies of love; to be ignorant of what 'paſſes in his breaſt—how hard the taſk! 'O duty, how rigorous are thy de-'mands!—But 'tis reſolved; and I will, 'I will obey.'

Had I not been ſeated in the darkeſt part of the room, and at the fartheſt diſtance from my father, it would have been impoſſible for him not to have taken notice of the diſorder theſe cruel thoughts imprinted on my countenance. But I was ſoon diverted from theſe gloomy images by Lucius; who trembling, with a ſoft and timorous air, changed all at once the ſubject that had employed the attention of all in the company but me; and fixing his eyes ſteadily on my father—'You have profeſſed an eſteem for 'me, Sir,' ſaid he, 'which neither my 'merit nor the ſmall time I have been 'in your company can juſtify. I am 'quite unknown to you; you are igno-'rant that I have raiſed my ambitious 'hopes to the happineſs of being allied 'to you: but, however you receive this 'confeſſion, do me the juſtice to believe, 'that I have never preſumed to harbour a 'thought of obtaining your daughter

'without your conſent; I love her too 'tenderly to injure you, or to think of 'depriving her of your affection, by 'perſuading her to forget her duty. 'You alone have a right to diſpoſe of 'her; and, O Sir! it is in your power 'to render me happy or miſerable!' With what pain did he utter theſe words, and with what an earneſt, beſeeching look, were they concluded! As for my father, the moment Lucius, ſoftening his voice, began to change the diſcourſe, he ſtarted, and viewing him with an earneſtneſs mixed with ſurprize, ſeemed to hear him with patience, and even let him conclude without once attempting to interrupt him; while I, ſwallowed up in attention, felt for ſome time a ſuſpenſion of all thought, of all ſenſation and idea: my ſoul ſeemed a void; every paſſion was huſhed; and every power waited the next words, to teach them how to act, and to ſet all in motion again: when my father replied—'I ſhall nei-'ther take upon me to enquire how far 'you have carried this regard for my 'authority, nor whether you are wor-'thy of her affection. She is very dear 'to me, and I have choſen a huſband 'for her every way capable of making her 'happy; you will oblige me, then, if 'you promiſe never to ſee her more.'—'Well, Sir, I cannot complain,' returned he, with a trembling voice; 'this 'is no more than I ought to have ex-'pected. I muſt loſe the lovely Feli-'cia, then, for ever! Well, you ſhall be 'obeyed; whatever it coſt me, you ſhall!' Here he pauſed, as if unable to proceed; and then continued—'No, I'll never be 'an obſtacle to her happineſs; ſhe ſhall 'never more be made uneaſy by my pre-'ſence, nor tempted to diſobey you by 'knowing my deſpair.'

O Madam, it was impoſſible for me to ſupport the effects of ſuch generous, painful ſentiments! A flood of tender ſorrow poured into my heart; my head grew giddy; a thick film in an inſtant overcaſt my eyes; and trembling and ſick, while every thing ran round, I ſeemed ſinking into death. My aunt perceived me, while my head was yet ſupported by the back of my chair, and my looks ſteadily fixed on Lucius; when obſerving my paleneſs, and crying out, 'Felicia is fainting!' ſhe ran to ſupport me in her arms, juſt as I was ready to fall upon the floor. It was a conſi-derable time, I believe, before I was brought to myſelf; but being ſtill very ſick and low-ſpirited, my aunt adviſed me to be laid upon my bed; when Ame-lia ſupporting me by one arm, and one of the ſervants by the other, I was con-veyed into my chamber, where I re-mained for ſome time in a ſtate little better than that of an entire inſenſibility, during which my aunt was ſo kind as to keep me company, ſitting all the while by my bed-ſide with a bottle of ſalts in her hand.

As ſoon as I had perfectly recovered my ſenſes, and began to look about me, the firſt queſtion I aſked was, if Lucius was gone? but my aunt could not ſa-tisfy me. I then deſired her to tell me how he behaved, and what impreſſion my diſorder had upon him; but ſhe avoided anſwering my queſtion, by ſay-ing—'Pray, my dear, don't make theſe 'uſeleſs enquiries. As you muſt now 'endeavour to forget him, it would 'have but an unhappy effect to ſtore 'your mind with thoughts that would 'only increaſe the difficulty of conquer-'ing your affection.' But ſhe had ſcarcely made this prudent reply, when Amelia came running into my room, and embracing me with an extaſy of joy—'O, my dear,' cried ſhe, with tears ſtarting from her eyes, 'Lucius 'has conquered; my uncle ſubmits, and 'gives you up to your lover!'—'It is 'impoſſible!' cried I, filled with an amaze-ment that almoſt deprived me again of my juſt recovered ſenſes. 'It is true! 'it is true! I aſſure you it is true!' re-ſumed ſhe, with the ſame tranſport. Here my aunt checked her friendly ar-dour, which ſhe feared might overpower my ſpirits; and forcing me to take a glaſs of wine and drops, to prepare me for what I had to hear, deſired Amelia to relate every thing that had paſſed; when ſeizing her hand, I entreated her to make haſte, but not to forget the leaſt parti-cular. She ſmiled at my eagerneſs; and with that ſatisfaction in her looks which always appears when a good mind has it in it's power to confer an extraordinary joy, without any ceremony began thus—

'The moment my mamma ran to 'prevent your falling from your chair, 'Lucius caſt his eyes upon you too; but 'he no ſooner beheld you, my dear, in 'that frightful ſituation, than he ap-'peared in a diſorder very little different 'from yours; but immediately recol-'lecting himſelf, he joined with my un-

'cle

'cle in uſing all his endeavours to recover you. He ran himſelf to fetch water, and gave it to your father, who 'ſprinkled your face: he ran for more; 'he flew into the dining-room for my 'mother's ſmelling-bottle, then for ſome 'drops. In ſhort, we had no need of 'any of the ſervants; he himſelf was 'more active than they all put together 'could have been, and did a thouſand 'mean offices for you, if any thing can 'be called mean that is done for a per'ſon in ſuch a ſituation. His life, his 'happineſs, his all ſeemed at ſtake. And 'though he could not have the leaſt hopes 'of obtaining you, his looks expreſſed 'a tenderneſs and ſolicitude that I could 'not help think ng even exceeded your 'father's. Though he durſt not approach you with the ſame freedoms 'as he did, yet he ſtood behind him, 'with his eyes fixed on your faded 'cheeks, while the tears ran down his, 'that with his fright wanted little of 'being as pale as yours; but the inſtant 'your colour began a little to return, 'his came in proportion; and as his apprehenſions vaniſhed, his countenance 'entirely changed. You opened your 'eyes; we ſaid you would recover; he 'was in a freſh tranſport, and ſeemed at 'that moment to have forgot that that 'was to be the laſt time of his ſeeing 'you. Ah, my dear Felicia,' continued ſhe, ſmiling, 'do you think Mellifont, in the ſame caſe, would have 'expreſſed an equal tenderneſs for me? 'I can hardly believe it.'

'O, my dear Lucius!' cried I, ſhedding ſome extatick tears. 'But pro'ceed.'—'Well,' reſumed ſhe, 'as ſoon 'as I came from helping you up ſtairs, 'having aſked me how you did, he 'turned to my uncle, and giving him 'a ſupplicating look—"Since I muſt "never more," ſaid he, with a ſigh, "behold your dear Felicia, permit me, "Sir, to ſtay till ſhe is come to herſelf. "I don't aſk to ſee her again; but——" "Enough, Sir," returned my uncle; "you may ſtay, and welcome; and I "take this opportunity of thanking you "for the ſervice we have received from "you in giving us your aſſiſtance: it "was generous; and what, after the declaration I had made you, I had not "the leaſt reaſon to expect; but, inſtead of being reproached, I was to "be obliged. My ſiſter has done you "juſtice in ſaying you have a mind very "different from your father's, and "therefore I believe you will not vindicate his extravagances; and it is his "character, more than any diſparity "of circumſtances, that makes me averſe "to your having my daughter; but if "you are an honeſt man, you will not "juſtify him. The ſavage brute "had——" "Who, Sir? what, my "father?" cried Lucius; while I was 'ſurprized to hear the perſon who had 'hitherto ſpoke with ſuch ſubmiſſive re'ſpect, now aſſume a tone ſo reſolute 'and lofty. "Yes, your father!" re'turned my uncle, as loud as he. "He "inſulted me, vilely inſulted me, in the "preſence of ſeveral gentlemen, who "turned him out of the room. They "gave me his character; related many "of his outrages; and convinced me "that he is a debauched, abandoned "fellow—a villain!"—"My father a "debauched, abandoned fellow!" re'ſumed Lucius, in the ſame tone; "my father a villain! Nothing but "your near relation to Felicia could prevent my reſenting the opprobrious "epithets. Heavens! my father called "a villain, and can I hear it with pa"tience? O Sir," continued he, ſoft'ening his voice, "ſpare my father!"—"Why, is it not true?" returned my 'uncle. "Is he not my father?" 'cried Lucius, interrupting him. "O "Sir! can I have ſo little delicacy, "ſo little ſenſe of duty, or honour, "as not to reſent ſuch language? "Can I be a ſon, and yet ſo void "of filial affection, as not to feel my "heart riſe with indignation, and eve"ry paſſion ſwell to juſtify my fa"ther?"—"Then you juſtify your "father?" replied again my uncle. "I beg," returned Lucius, "you "would not preſs this ſubject. You "are Miſs Felicia's father, and he is "mine; I would therefore preſerve a "reſpect for you both. Mine has, I "confeſs, his faults, but he has his "virtues too. His faults I would conceal from all the world; I would bury "them in eternal oblivion; I would blot "them even from my own remembrance; I would wipe them from my "thoughts, to ſave myſelf the prepoſterous ſhame of bluſhing for a parent. "But yet, whatever he may deſerve, I "am ſure I don't deſerve to hear him "treated ſo."

'My uncle here,' continued Amelia,

'sat fixed in admiration, while friend-
'ſhip and ſurprize were mingled in his
'looks. He was ſilent; he ſeemed at a
'loſs for an anſwer: when, at laſt, giving
'Lucius his hand—"Your ſentiments
"are admirable, Sir," cried he; "and
"I can't help thinking him very happy,
"in having in ſo generous a ſon ſo
"good an advocate. I beg pardon for
"my want of delicacy in ſhocking
"yours." Here heſitating a moment,
'with a friendly diſorder in his counte-
'nance, that ſhewed him ſtopped by an
'affecting thought which he waited to
'indulge, he reſumed—"But if a fa-
"ther, who has taken ſo little care of
"his family, can inſpire in a ſon ſuch
"tender duty, ſuch noble friendſhip,
"how great would be that ſon's affec-
"tion, had he one who employed the
"whole bent of his ſoul in contributing
"to his felicity?" You can't conceive,
'my dear Felicia,' continued ſhe, 'how
'feelingly theſe words were expreſſed.
'Lucius himſelf, notwithſtanding his
'diſappointed hopes, ſeemed extremely
'moved with them; when, with a co-
'lour as red as ſcarlet, he haſtily re-
'plied—"'Twas in you, Sir, that I
"hoped to have found ſuch a father.
"But why did I hope it?—that is now
"impoſſible—I ſhall ſee your dear, your
"charming Felicia, no more. It is
"true, my preſumption in daring to
"love her is inexcuſable: but I will try
"whether abſence and philoſophy can
"teach me to conquer my paſſion; if
"they cannot, I muſt be unhappy."
'Here he aroſe, with a viſible confuſion
'in his looks; and added, with a ſigh—
"Pray ſend to know how ſhe does, for
"I muſt retire."

'Lucius having taken a turn or two
'about the room, with a diſorder that I
'don't know how to expreſs, but which
'ſeemed to ariſe from his thinking he
'had ſaid too much, by confeſſing the
'pleaſure he had felt in hoping for a fa-
'ther of my uncle's virtue—for thoſe
'words ſeemed rather to break from his
'heart than his tongue—Lucius, I would
'ſay, having taken a turn about the
'room, and finding my uncle make no
'reply to his deſire of knowing how
'you did, opened the door, ſaying—
"Your, ſervant, Sir; I wiſh Felicia
"happy. I will ſend myſelf, to know
"if ſhe is recovered." When, ſeeing
'him going, your father aroſe, deſired
'him to ſtay a little longer, and told him
'he could not part with him ſo ſuddenly.
'Upon this your lover returned; and
'they both being again ſeated, af-
'ter a ſhort ſilence, (for your father,
'my dear,' continued ſhe, 'appeared
'buried in thought) he reſumed—'I
"confeſs, Sir, I admire your virtues,
"and am perſuaded we ſhall part upon
"much better terms: pray let me know
"the circumſtances of your family, and
"whether you have any eſtate in your
"own hands." Here I took upon me
'to reply, and endeavoured to give him
'the characters of Sophronia and Ma-
'rilla, which I told my uncle I could
'do with a much better grace than Lu-
'cius, as his modeſty might be offended
'ſhould he do juſtice to perſons whoſe
'merit was ſo nearly allied to his, that
'he could not be ſuppoſed to praiſe them
'as they deſerved, without reflecting
'great part of the honour upon him-
'ſelf. But, my dear Felicia, this was
'not my real motive; I could not ſit by
'and ſee ſuch a charming reconciliation
'carried on, without deſiring at leaſt to
'have a ſmall ſhare in it. I had waited
'a good while to put in a word that
'might be of ſervice to you, but could
'not find a better opportunity than that
'which now offered.'

'Well, thank you, my dear,' replied
I; 'but pray proceed. You might have
'told me that to-morrow. Come,
'make haſte.'—'Your father, Miſs,'
continued ſhe, 'appeared extremely
'delighted with what he heard; nor
'was he much leſs pleaſed to hear Lu-
'cius tell him that he had an eſtate,
'(which, though much leſs than yours,
'might ſerve to vindicate his giving
'him his daughter;) and indeed he was
'no ſooner informed of theſe parti-
'culars, than taking Lucius's hand,
'with an affectionate ſmile, he cried—
"Your virtue, Sir, has conquered. I
"admire your ſentiments, and approve
"Felicia's choice. I give you my
"daughter, and wiſh you both all ima-
"ginable happineſs." With a rapi-
'dity as quick as thought, he now threw
'himſelf at my uncle's feet. He was
'unable to ſpeak; he graſped his hand,
'wetted it with tears; and I having
'waited for a minute for ſome extatick
'rapture, and perceiving him ſtill ſilent,
'flew to be the firſt meſſenger of this
'delightful news.'

'O!' cried I aloud, 'ſure this is all
'a dream! Am I—am I ſo happy! ſo

'very

'very happy! Where is my father? 'where is my Lucius? I will run and 'indulge my fondneſs for them both.' Then, ſeeing my aunt laughing at my rapture, I flew into her arms, embraced her, and then Amelia. 'Come,' continued I, 'let us go; I can't ſtay a mo-'ment.' They humoured my impatience, and all of us ran together into the parlour. My father was ſtanding with his eyes affectionately fixed on Lucius, who ſtood by him holding his hand, and I ſuppoſe giving a looſe to all the rapture of a tranſported heart; when breaking from him, my father flew to receive me with open arms. 'Come, my child,' cried he, 'ſhare in my ſatisfaction. I 'approve your choice. It ſhall now be 'this gentleman's ſtudy to render you 'happy.' Here having embraced me with a tender affection, he took hold of my hand; when aſking Lucius for his, he laid mine upon it, and then graſping both together—'God bleſs you both, my 'children,' cried he, lifting up his eyes, while the tears ſtole down his cheeks; 'God bleſs you both, and render your 'happineſs eternal. Do you, my ſon, 'remember,' added he, ſtill holding our hands, while he ſuffered Lucius to cloſe his upon mine, with a tender preſſure, which my father rendered yet more pleaſing, by holding both ours between his; 'remember, that as by your vir-'tues you now arrive at the height of 'your wiſhes, ſo only virtue will render 'your happineſs compleat and durable.' Then turning to me, 'he proceeded—'And do you, my dear, remember, that 'now all your felicity in this life de-'pends on your pleaſing Lucius. He is 'your own choice; and I command you, 'as you expect to be happy, never to 'mention, or by the leaſt action let him 'think, that you believe him obliged 'to you for the great addition that, by 'your means, is made to his fortune. 'God bleſs you both, my children!' To this my aunt and Amelia gave a hearty Amen; when giving us an affectionate ſhake, he let go our hands, and Lucius embraced me with tranſport, while my aunt and couſin drew near to congratulate us on this happy occaſion. Their eyes ſparkled with joy, their faces glowed with pleaſure, and every word and every look ſpoke the ſympathy between their hearts and ours. Wherever we turned our eyes, the ſoul of happineſs ſat beaming in every look; they beheld us with the tranſport Mr. Thomſon deſcribes, when he ſays—

"Twas friendſhip heighten'd by the mutual
"wiſh,
"Th' enchanting hope and ſympathetick
"glow,
"Struck from the charmful eye. Devoting
"each
"To love."——

While my father ſtood looking on, with a ſuperior degree of conſcious pleaſure in his air:

"Supremely happy in th' awaken'd power
"Of giving joy."——

The evening was ſpent with pleaſure and delight. Sophronia and Marilla were ſent for, and bore a part in our common ſatisfaction. And nothing then ſeemed wanting to render our felicity compleat. Yet I aſſure you, Madam, not all this delight could prevent my anticipating the pleaſure you would receive from this happy news, nor eraſe from my thoughts the remembrance of how much I am your ladyſhip's moſt obliged ſervant,

FELICIA

LETTER XXII.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WHILE I was reading yours, every line of which expreſſed the moſt generous and tender ſympathy in my diſtreſs, I could not help being extremely delighted with the thought, that you were perhaps the ſame moment engaged in peruſing my laſt, where you would learn, that you might freely baniſh all your fears, ſince I muſt now appear greatly above your pity. It was a pleaſing reflection, Madam; and I aſſure you, I could not entertain myſelf with the ſatisfaction you would receive on this occaſion, without feeling a great increaſe of my own. Sure nothing can be more natural than to ſhare in the joy we ourſelves occaſion, when ſelf-love and friendſhip both conſpire to aid the ſympathetick delight; and to reflect back the pleaſure another feels from our happineſs.

But

But what a ſtrange ſcheme! Could anything be more extravagant! To ſend all my letters to my father, to open his eyes to the perfections of my lover, and to convince him, as you ſay, from thoſe unguarded overflowings of my heart, that our paſſion has been hitherto carried on with the ſtricteſt regard to virtue, and all the obligations of duty. Really it was an excellent artifice to remove his prejudices; and, for what I know, might have been attended with ſucceſs. I was preſent when my father received the parcel, and could not help being a witneſs of the ſurprize he diſcovered at ſeeing a large bundle of letters incloſed; when having given me that directed for me, and read yours to himſelf, he called my aunt aſide, and ſmiling, retired with her to read their contents, while I was under little or no apprehenſions of the conſequence of having thoſe tender tranſcripts of my heart diſcovered; for though I had entirely forgotten the contents of moſt of my letters, a conſciouſneſs of the ſincerity of my duty kept my mind at eaſe, and, would not ſuffer me to fear that I had wrote any thing that could poſſibly offend him. But I had no ſooner read yours, and indulged for a conſiderable time ſome of thoſe pleaſing thoughts due to friendſhip and you, than a ſudden reſtleſs impulſe of curioſity made me long to know what effect my letters had on thoſe intereſted perſons, my father and my aunt. I therefore aroſe, in order to attempt a diſcovery, which I had not patience to wait for till they made it themſelves: I found them in my aunt's cloſet; and the door not being locked, I gently puſhed it a little open, and ſaw them both ſeated with their backs towards me, with the eſcritore, before which they were ſitting, covered with papers. The good lady was liſtening to my father, who continued reading with a low voice, while ſhe looked over him; but I had not ſtood a minute in this ſituation, when turning their heads ſo that I diſcovered half their faces, on which were imprinted ſome lively traces of ſatisfaction, they gave each other a glance, my father crying out at the ſame time, in a tranſport—'O the dear girl!' Elated with this tender exclamation, I took a ſtep farther, and forgetting that I was only a kind of a ſpy, and ought therefore to be concealed, I puſhed the door a little too rudely, which grating againſt the floor, they both ſtarted, and turning their eyes to the place from whence the noiſe proceeded, diſcovered me. I was now quite diſconcerted, and you may be ſure had an air not a little ridiculous, for my curioſity now appeared worthy of ſhame; and therefore caſting down my eyes, was at a loſs whether to go in or retire; but before I could determine, my aunt put an end to my embarraſſment, by calling out—'What, Felicia! is it you? 'I could be almoſt angry with you. We 'were reading your ſoul, it was talking 'to us; and here you, like a little im-'pertinent, muſt come and interrupt 'the entertainment you yourſelf was 'giving us!' At this I boldly entered the room, when they both joining in their careſſes, and I making ſome apologies, frankly confeſſed the motive of my coming, and the effect my father's goodneſs had in making me unattentive to the neceſſary precautions of being concealed. They laughed at my ingenuity; and having, at their requeſt, brought them your letters, and placed them in the order I received them, I left them to their entertainment; and going down ſtairs, took a walk with Amelia in the garden, where we for ſome time indulged the pleaſure of diſcourſing on each other's happineſs. We then made a compariſon between love and friendſhip; talked of you; and, in ſhort, were very merry with your expedient for promoting my felicity.

O Madam! when our minds, after a dreadful ſtorm that has threatened the wreck of all that is moſt dear and valuable, perceive themſelves entirely at eaſe, and wafted by the chearful gale of every pleaſing paſſion, we find new charms in all around us; a thouſand opening joys, that would otherwiſe paſs unheeded, break in upon our ſouls, and contribute to heighten our ſatisfaction; we have a quicker taſte for every new acceſſion of delight; and filled with that complacency, which makes us look upon every thing with a ſmile, every object in return ſeems to ſmile upon us. And while we are in this ſituation, not only friendſhip and love wrap the mind in the moſt pure etherial delights, but the glittering ſunbeams, the balmy breeze, the verdant groves, and all the laviſh bounty of nature, give us a ſenſible pleaſure. O how ſweet are the delights which Heaven has thus

thus prepared for mortals! But how much more exquiſite are the charms of innocence and conſcious virtue, which give a pleaſing reliſh to all theſe natural beauties! Affliction and diſtreſs, inrankling care, and all the painful bitter guſh of grief, the darkſome ſhades of Providence! like the clouds and ſtorms of Nature, roaring round the high-raiſed mountain, and echoing with a horrid yell through all her diſtant caverns, ſerve to beautify the variegated ſcene, and heighten the glow of her returning ſmiles. Our tears, "that rain of eyes," ſwell the humane bloſſom; the kindly ſhower cheriſhes the hidden ſeeds of virtue, opens the lovely foliage, and with the next returning ſun the freſh budding graces ſtand confeſſed. But to return from this long digreſſion, which I hope you will think not altogether impertinent.

At dinner I had the pleaſure of Lucius's company, a happineſs I now enjoy every day; when I took notice that my father, who could not yet have read half my letters, behaved with a peculiar complaiſance, and treated him with a reſpect I had never obſerved before: and indeed, if his eſteem and affection for Lucius increaſes, as it has done ſince our grand reconciliation, he may poſſibly be in greater haſte to compleat our union than I deſire he ſhould be; for, between you and I, I begin to grow a coward, and am a little afraid of entering into the awful, aukward ſtate, from whence, you know, as from the regions of death, there is no return. However, your example, and that of Amelia's, I don't doubt, will give me the courage neceſſary to go through the ſolemn ceremony with a pretty good grace. But I find my happineſs makes me grow lazy; and as I have nothing now very material to add, ſhall conclude, yours, &c.

FELICIA.

LETTER XXIII.

DEAR MADAM,

MY father's affection for Lucius is now ariſen to ſuch a height, that I hardly know whether he or I have the greater ſhare in his heart; they are become almoſt inſeparable, and are united in a friendſhip that appears very extraordinary in perſons between whom there is ſuch a wide difference with reſpect to age. He is perpetually at our houſe, and the company of the lover is pretty equally ſhared between the happy father and the ſtill more happy daughter. Methinks this indulgent parent is more laviſh of his careſſes to me than uſual; he is continually approving my choice, and giving me inſtructions to regulate my conduct by ſuch rules as, he ſays, will render my felicity compleat. He has read to me ſeveral Spectators on this ſubject, to which he has ſubjoined many obſervations that have fallen within his own notice. And I aſſure you, Madam, it ſhall be my care to put all his wiſe maxims in practice. To ſtudy our own happineſs, and that of thoſe we love, is an affair of the utmoſt conſequence; nor can we take too much pains in the noble employment, which is at once both our duty, our honour, and the ſource of the moſt ſolid and laſting joys. My ſoul is too delicate, and my tenderneſs for the amiable Lucius too ſublime, to ſuffer me to think without pain on thoſe little jars, thoſe petty quarrels, which interrupt the felicity of ſome of the moſt happy pairs, and ſometimes make breaches dreadfully fatal to their future repoſe. They are upon their guard as to things that ſeem of importance; but while their minds lie open to trifles, thoſe trifles ſoon become affairs of the utmoſt conſequence. To theſe little incidents we are continually expoſed; and therefore, as my father ſays, they are much more to be feared than thoſe that at firſt view appear of the greateſt moment. However, the taſk which he hath inculcated cannot be very diſpleaſing, ſince all his rules are perfectly agreeable to my inclinations, and only conſiſt of ſuch maxims as muſt, if obſerved, perpetuate our mutual felicity. O my dear friend! tell me—for you know—if there can be greater pleaſure than that which reſults from the reflection of pleaſing a perſon dearer, infinitely dearer to us, than ourſelves! The grateful look, the kindling glance, the expreſſive glow of tender fondneſs, ſilently ſhot from the thankful eye—O, can there be a greater reward, to ſoften the charming toil, if that can be called a toil that will gladden the heart we love? For this I will read and ſtudy, to enrich my mind; for this I will dreſs; for this I will plot new arts to pleaſe; while virtue, innocence, and truth, ſhall lead the way,

and

and mark my path to laſting bliſs. What delight the diſtant proſpect beams upon my ſoul! My Lucius! my huſband! my friend! Dear epithets! enchanting ſounds!—ſounds ſwelling with every thrilling joy! O, All-gracious Being! may my abilities be equal to the ardor of my ſoul! May the wife be loſt in the friend; the ſoft, the tender, the generous friend!

Theſe laſt thoughts ariſe in my mind whenever I entertain myſelf with the grateful ſubject of my father's inſtructions: but the pleaſure I may be ſuppoſed to receive from theſe reſolutions is extremely damped by abundance of intruding fears that daſh my joy with a mixture of bitterneſs; I tremble leſt, in the unguarded moments of my life, I ſhould drop the guard I reſolve to keep over my temper; leſt I ſhould forget to pleaſe, or loſe the power of doing it. Thoughts that are always attended with pain.

You ſee what a fond, unfaſhionable creature, I am grown; but as your ladyſhip has given me ſome reaſon to believe that you are not leſs weak than myſelf, I boldly brave your ſatire; ſo that if you make merry with me on this occaſion, I ſhall freely join in the laugh.

My happineſs is now ſo great, that there ſeems nothing wanting but the conſideration of it's being perpetual, to render it compleat. Nor does Amelia's appear leſs exquiſite than mine; we are ſurrounded with every laughing delight, every ſocial endearment. The congratulations of our friends, the careſſes of our parents, the tenderneſs of our lovers, and the pleaſing ſympathy in each other's felicity, all contribute to heighten our joy; while rapture itſelf grows more pleaſing, by ſettling into a ſerene and moſt charming tranquillity. Every thing is prepared for the ceremony that is to unite us for ever to the deareſt perſons on earth; and next Thurſday Amelia and I are to be hailed under the title of Brides, and initiated into the dignified ſtate of venerable Matrons. And, between you and I, Madam, we both heartily wiſh theſe ſolemn doings over, for really they have ſomething terrible in them that frights at a diſtance.

Thus far, Madam, I had written yeſterday; at which time I had no other care than how to render Lucius and myſelf as happy as poſſible, except ſome little intruding thoughts of the awkward appearance I ſhould make at church, and thoſe natural inquietudes which are apt to perplex the mind upon the view of an important change in our circumſtances; all which were counterbalanced by abundance of moſt charming reflections. But the ſcene ſoon changed. Alas! what is life, but a perpetual round of vexations and diſappointments! a rapid ſucceſſion of intermingled pleaſures and pains! Theſe cares and theſe delightful thoughts ſoon vaniſhed, they gave place to other cares of a more bitter kind, unmixed with the leaſt thought that could alleviate their force, or ſtill the tumult of my troubled mind.

Yeſterday we had Mellifont's company as uſual. The time paſſed away very agreeably; and though I had not ſeen Lucius all the preceding day, I felt little uneaſineſs on account of his abſence. I knew if he was ill I ſhould have heard from him, and therefore did not queſtion but he was detained by ſome extraordinary buſineſs, which would be no ſooner finiſhed than I ſhould ſee him again, with a ſatisfaction that would be greatly increaſed by our being deprived for a ſhort time of each other's company. Thus, while anticipating the eagerneſs with which I fancied he would fly to me, the pleaſure I ſhould obſerve in his countenance, and the tender apologies he would doubtleſs make on this occaſion, I recompenſed myſelf for the loſs of a preſent gratification, with the pleaſing thoughts of the future: though Mellifont, Amelia, and even my aunt, could not help cenſuring him a little ſeverely, while I took his part with a good deal of vivacity, and let them know that I did not think I had the leaſt reaſon to be offended.

However, in the evening, I had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing him enter the court. My heart bounded with joy, and a ſudden thrill of delight darted through every vein. He entered the room, he ſaluted me, but it was with ſuch a kind of cold reſtraint, as at once alarmed and pierced my ſoul. I knew not what to think, nor how to behave. I felt an emotion which I know not how to deſcribe, a painful flutter of ſpirits; when having made a ſhort apology, by ſaying he had been detained by ſome affairs of the utmoſt conſequence, he took his ſeat, and joined in the converſation, with a diſtraction that was too viſible for me not

not to take particular notice of it, while methought he had an air of conſtraint that ſeemed quite unnatural to him. He avoided looking at me; and whenever his eyes chanced to meet mine, he ſuddenly caſt them down. O what could I think! could I imagine that he was grown perfidious, and that I had loſt my empire over his heart? No, I could not believe it; I could not entertain a thought ſo injurious to the fair idea I had conceived of his truth and goodneſs. However, all that engaging frankneſs, which had hitherto appeared on his countenance, was vaniſhed, and I was ignorant of the cauſe. 'Some ſtrange 'event,' thought I, 'muſt have happen-'ed, in which I am greatly intereſted.' I was ready to imagine any thing, rather than that Lucius, my dear, dear Lucius, could be falſe.

At laſt, Mellifont and Amelia leaving the room, my aunt ſoon followed, and we were left together, without the interruption of company; a ſituation which I had longed for ever ſince I obſerved this reſtraint in his behaviour, though his coldneſs would not ſuffer me to take any meaſures to obtain this ſatisfaction. His eyes now ſoftened, while drooping with ſome ſecret care, every feature had an air of reluctant languiſhment. His tenderneſs had a mixture of fear and compaſſion, and methought he even ſeemed to dread my reproaches. We both continued ſilent; his eyes were ſteadily fixed on mine. A ſigh, a tear, eſcaped him. He held down his head, to ſtifle his ſighs, to hide his tears. O how nearly did they touch me! what a violent emotion did they raiſe in my breaſt! my heart throbbed; a pang of grief and ſoft ſurprize ſtruck through my ſoul. I longed to know the cauſe of what I ſaw, yet dreaded to aſk it. When at laſt breaking ſilence—'O my dear Lucius,' cried I, unable to reſtrain my tears, 'tell 'me, for Heaven's ſake, tell me what is 'the matter, what is it that diſturbs 'you? I muſt know it. Have you a 'care that I have not a right to ſhare 'with you? Let me know what dread-'ful misfortune it is that gives you this 'pain. Indeed, if I can, I will remove 'it.' At this I ſighed and wiped my eyes; while he, with his ſtill fixed on the floor, echoed back my ſighs; when, as if ſtruggling to conquer the glut of ſorrow which choaked up his voice—'O 'my Felicia! my dear, my lovely Fe-'licia!' ſaid he, 'let me perſuade you 'to forget me; I will never involve you 'in the miſeries of our unhappy fa-'mily.'—'What do you mean?' cried I, haſtily interrupting him, and ſcarce able to believe my ears, 'I don't under-'ſtand you.'—'Alas! my dear,' rejoined he, in a ſorrowful tone; 'you cannot 'be mine, I don't deſerve——' 'How!' interrupted I again, ſtunned at his words; but immediately my pride helping me to recollect myſelf, I coldly rejoined, 'Well, Sir, juſt as you pleaſe.'

Here I was going to fling out of the room, when a ſudden glance in a moment diſpelled my indignation; while Love, with all it's humbling powers, took entire poſſeſſion of my ſoul. I ſaw him with his eyes greedily fixed on me; they overflowed with a melting ſoftneſs, and at the ſame time ſparkling through the cryſtal ſwell with awful dignity, ſeemed to expreſs ſome great, ſome hidden purpoſe. Every degree of confuſion was vaniſhed, not the leaſt tincture of ſhame remained. His countenance had an air of open frankneſs, and no other traces were viſible there but thoſe of perfect tenderneſs and ſoft regret. What could I now think? or what could I ſay? I perceived that there was ſome extraordinary cauſe that forced him to behave in this manner; I perceived (or at leaſt I thought I did) that it was with reluctance he ſtruggled againſt his love, and endeavoured to forget me; yet I flattered myſelf, that if I did but know the motive to this painful taſk, I ſhould be able to give him ſome relief, and perhaps let him ſee, that there was no occaſion for ſuch a victory over his paſſion: yet, however glad I ſhould have been to have heard his reaſons, I had ſtill too much pride to enquire into them; the ſhame of meanly ſtooping to deſire to be informed of theſe particulars ſhocked me immediately; I ſaw plainly, that this would appear too forward, and too evidently expreſs the difficulty I ſhould have to overcome my tenderneſs.

Theſe reflections, which glanced through my mind in a moment, kept me ſilent, and prevented my aſking to be informed of what I impatiently longed to hear; when finding me ſtill continue ſpeechleſs—'You wonder, my dear,' ſaid Lucius, 'and are at a loſs to find 'arguments to excuſe my behaviour; 'but, could I prefer my own happineſs 'to yours, I might ſtill be as bleſt as I

'could wiſh; as bleſt as the moſt high-
'wrought imagination can conceive: I
'might barbarouſly conſult my own
'felicity to the prejudice of your hap-
'pineſs and future peace of mind. But
'I love you more dearly than life, and
'therefore can never conſent to involve
'you in my misfortunes. I will never
'be guilty of ſuch baſeneſs. O my dear
'Felicia! call not this a want of affec-
'tion; rather think it the triumph of the
'moſt perfect love, the ſtrongeſt proof
'of the moſt generous diſintereſtedneſs.
'But what will this coſt me? In loſing
'you, I abandon every earthly joy—I
'bid adieu to the moſt pleaſing proſpects,
'to the enchanting ſweets of the moſt
'pure and virtuous—— To ſee you
'no more!'

At this moment my aunt's return put a ſtop to this moving diſcourſe; when Lucius and I endeavouring to compoſe our countenances, he enquired if my father would return that evening, for he had been out all day; and being told he would, he promiſed to come the next morning early, to pay him his reſpects, and immediately left us.

In this ſituation I am at preſent. I form a thouſand conjectures, each of which perhaps is groundleſs; and notwithſtanding all my endeavours to penetrate the cauſe of this ſudden change, am as much in the dark as ever. However, I muſt believe him ſincere, and therefore cannot ſuſpect that he wants a pretence to break his engagements. No, I am ſure he tenderly loves me; it would be criminal to doubt it. But a few hours more will now diſcover the whole affair; till when at leaſt I ſhall be your ladyſhip's moſt unhappy friend,

FELICIA.

P. S. The uneaſy torment of ſuſpence not allowing me to ſleep, I could not think of any expedient to paſs away the tedious interval till Lucius's return, ſo agreeably as in opening my heart to you: I therefore aroſe two hours before the reſt of the family, and employed my time in writing you the above.

LETTER XXIV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I NOW ſend you two letters together, the dates of which will tell you in what order they are to be read. In the firſt you find me plunged into freſh anxiety, into all the pains of diſappointed love. In this you will ſee the cauſe of this mighty change, a great mind ſtruggling between love and generoſity.

About an hour after I had concluded the other letter, a ſervant came to tell me that breakfaſt was ready. I went down with a mind extremely perplexed; when, in ſpite of all my endeavours to aſſume an air of eaſe and gaiety, they perceived my diſorder; but inſtead of enquiring into the reaſon of it, as I expected, only ſtrove to divert my penſive thoughtfulneſs, by turning it into ridicule. At laſt, however, Lucius appeared, and by his preſence put an end to their unſeaſonable mirth, which began to grow extremely painful. Breakfaſt was now over, and the dear youth deſiring my father and I to favour him with our company, went with us into a room, where we had no reaſon to fear being diſturbed; and having taken our ſeats, with eyes in which were intermingled an air of dignity, with the ſoft languiſhment of love, he caſt a glance at me, and then fixing them on my father—'Sir,' cried he, 'I am now come
'to thank you for your unmerited good-
'neſs; and, by an ingenuous confeſſion
'of my circumſtances, to let you ſee,
'that I am unworthy of the happineſs
'of poſſeſſing your daughter. Nay,
'Sir,' continued he, ſeeing him look aſtoniſhed, 'I don't wonder at your be-
'ing ſtartled at an addreſs of this na-
'ture; but ſince I cannot now marry
'her with honour, I muſt do you and
'her the juſtice to decline it.'

Struck dumb with ſurprize, my father at firſt ſeemed incapable of making a reply; he rivetted his eyes upon Lucius, who at the ſame time caſt his eyes to the floor; his colour came and went, he knit his brows, while his countenance expreſſed a confuſed mixture of vexation, anger, and diſappointment; when, at laſt, ſeeming to collect his ſcattered thoughts, 'What can this mean?' cried he; 'I
'deſire you would explain yourſelf.
'What diſadvantage can there be in
'your circumſtances, that you ought not
'to have mentioned before? It was a
'baſe and ungenerous part to endeavour
'to engage my daughter's affections,
'and thus to carry things to the laſt ex-
'tremity, when you knew you could
'not marry her with honour; and I
'don't doubt, but ſhe will reſent ſuch
'treatment

'treatment as ſhe ought. She will re-
'gard your conduct as an inſult to hu-
'manity, and as an affront that deſerves
'only to be anſwered with contempt.'

Though this was expreſſed with all the bitterneſs of reſentment, in his voice and air, yet it appeared to make but little impreſſion on Lucius; only a modeſt, guiltleſs bluſh, flaſhed in his cheek, which ſeemed to ariſe from the indignant pride of injured innocence; when finding that my father, by his ſilence, waited for his anſwer—'I am ſorry, Sir,' ſaid he, in a bold and manly tone, 'to
'find you entertain ſo ill an opinion of
'me; but were I that ungrateful wretch
'you think me, I ſhould deſerve even
'greater reproaches than thoſe you are
'pleaſed to load me with; Felicia's merit
'would then juſtify this warmth in an
'indulgent father: but I beg you would
'do me the juſtice to hear me; and I
'don't doubt but that, notwithſtanding
'I may appear a more unequal match
'than ever, you will ſtill think I deſerve
'a place in your eſteem. My misfor-
'tunes call for pity, and not reſent-
'ment. I have choſen to be unhappy
'rather than to ſee my father expoſed to
'the miſeries of a priſon. I have loſt
'Felicia to ſave my father! Think,
'Sir, what a ſon muſt feel at the very
'thought of ſeeing a perſon whom na-
'ture, whom ten thouſand obligations
'has bound him to love and revere, in
'a gaol, in a dark, unwholeſome priſon,
'excluded from the chearful face of
'man, lingering out a wretched being in
'penury, while he enjoyed—— O! it
'is too much; affluence in ſuch circum-
'ſtances would be a curſe, while na-
'ture would extinguiſh all the delight
'of love, and embitter it's moſt pleaſing
'ſweets. 'Tis true, I might have con-
'cealed my giving up my fortune to
'procure his liberty. I *might* have done
'it; and had I been baſe enough to in-
'jure your goodneſs, I *had* done it. I
'might in this caſe have confided in
'the generoſity of Felicia's mind, who
'after our union might have excuſed
'my deceiving her, and have kept it a
'ſecret. But I could neither reſolve to
'marry her in ſuch wretched circum-
'ſtances, nor to impoſe upon you. I
'had yeſterday morning five thouſand
'pounds; I have now but two, a miſer-
'able pittance to ſupport the exigence
'of a family, born above the inconve-
'nience of low life! for to this uſe it
'muſt be applied. Alas! what inconve-
'niences ſhall we labour under! But
'what are theſe inconveniences, to
'the ten thouſand times more painful
'ſhock of the rich man's ſcorn, the
'indignant leer, the contemptuous
'taunts and ſhrugs of the wealthy fool,
'the dread of needy creditors! Theſe,
'even at a diſtance, ſtrike terror through
'the ſoul, and damp the generous pride
'of upright virtue. But is a wretch like
'this a proper match for the lovely, the
'wealthy Felicia? No, you cannot, and
'I ought not to think it. Inſtead of
'an eſtate, ſhall I bring her the ne-
'ceſſities of an unhappy family? Forbid
'it Heaven! forbid it love! Can I in
'theſe circumſtances ungratefully im-
'poſe on that generoſity that made you
'overlook the diſparity of our fortune,
'which was too great before? No, no,
'Sir; you muſt no longer think of me
'as your ſon, nor I of her as the dear
'companion of my life. The conſcious-
'neſs of having now done my duty, in
'reſigning all my pretenſions, will help
'me to ſupport her loſs—I already feel
'it will. Do you then teach her to for-
'get me. Though I ſhall ſee her no
'more, ſhe ſhall have my prayers, and
'all my fondeſt wiſhes. Good God!
'whatever I ſuffer, may Felicia at leaſt
'be happy!'

O! Madam, had you but ſeen with what a flood of paſſion this ſpeech was uttered, you would—I am ſure you would have been extremely moved. He wept—and ſure never did tears look ſo graceful on a manly cheek before! My father wept too, and I faſter than them both; while he purſued, without interruption, the noble dictates of his generous heart, burſting into the incoherent language of tender diſtreſs. But I muſt be more particular with reſpect to my father: for Lucius had hardly began this apology, when the reſentment which reddened in his cheek began inſenſibly to vaniſh; his features, before ſwelled with indignation, now ſunk imperceptibly, and left only the ſoft traces of pity, blended with a wonder that ſeemed to ariſe amidſt thoſe generous ſentiments which elevate the ſoul above itſelf. He appeared intereſted in every word the dear engaging youth uttered; nor did the broken ſighs, which frequently diſjointed them, the groans of his throbbing heart, the trembling accent of his voice, or the leaſt change in his countenance,

ſeem to eſcape his notice. I ſaw it did not—with a ſecret joy I ſaw it; and rejoiced in the humanity of his heart, which made him pity the noble diſtreſs of my lover, at this moment more dear than ever. Never did the high-wrought images of even a fictitious tale preſent a ſcene ſo moving as this would have been to an indifferent ſpectator; the moſt inſenſible breaſt muſt ſure have melted into ſoftneſs, the dryeſt eye have guſhed into tears.

After Lucius had finiſhed, there remained a ſilence which laſted near a minute—an awful, tender ſilence, which was only interrupted by a few heaving ſighs; when at laſt my father ſmiling, with an expreſſive affection in his look—'Indeed, Sir,' ſaid he, 'I have been too 'haſty; you deſerve to be pitied: but 'what ſtrange magick do you find to 'ſoften me thus? I profeſs I have not 'ſhed ſo many tears theſe eighteen years; 'never ſince I loſt Felicia's mother, my 'dear Elmira. But I beg you would 'do me the favour, my friend,' added he, 'to give me the particulars of this 'affecting ſtory.'

'Oh! Sir,' reſumed my dear Lucius, 'you have a right to demand every thing 'from me: and though no mercenary 'view can tempt me to betray Felicia 'into ruin; though I have not the leaſt 'diſtant hope of ever obtaining her by 'this confeſſion, which can have no 'other effect than to convince you that 'Heaven never deſigned her for me; the 'reſpect I owe you, and the deſire I 'have to appear ſtill worthy of your 'friendſhip, will make me give you all 'the ſatisfaction you can deſire. Two 'days ago, as I was preparing to pay 'this lovely maid a viſit, a meſſenger 'from my father, who went out pretty 'early that morning, brought me a 'note, by which I was informed that he 'was under an arreſt from one of his 'principal creditors. What could I do, 'but inſtantly fly to him! I found him 'in the houſe of one of our dependants, 'with no other company than the officers who deprived him of his liberty. 'He received me with an air of dejected 'ſadneſs; while his attendants, ſtepping to the door, left me at liberty to 'indulge the torturing anguiſh of my 'heart, by endeavouring to give him 'the comfort I wanted myſelf. "Oh "Lucius!" ſaid he, ſeeing me enter, "you ſee your father a priſoner!" This 'was all he could ſay, before I ſprung 'into his arms. I could not ſpeak to 'him: we both ſeated ourſelves on a 'bench near the table; when having caſt 'his eyes upon me again, with an air 'of the deepeſt melancholy and diſtreſs, 'he gave me a particular account of the 'ſituation of his affairs; an account 'that filled my mind with diſtraction, 'yet in a great meaſure put a ſtop to 'that torturing hurry, that flutter of 'ſpirits, with which I had before caſt 'about my thoughts to give him relief; 'ſince I was now ſenſible that there was 'but one way to ſave him, and that, at 'firſt view, gave the moſt violent ſhock 'to my ſoul. Oh! Sir, how hard, how intolerably hard it is to root out of the heart 'a paſſion like mine! You, Madam,' continued he, looking at me, 'appeared 'in that moment more charming than 'ever; ten thouſand pleaſing, diſtracting ideas, crouded upon my mind, 'and overwhelmed my ſenſes in a mazy 'whirl of giddineſs. My reaſon ſeemed deſerting, while my breaſt was 'torn between love and nature, between 'duty and the tender—too tender ſoftneſs that melts, and charms, and ſwallows up the ſoul. Good God! what 'did I feel! The ſigh, the tear, the unkind reproach from my dear Felicia, 'and all the diſtraction of her boſom, 'was felt with a double emphaſis in 'mine: but I ſoon came to a reſolution; 'the manner in which my father concluded the painful ſtory of his ſituation 'of his affairs, fixed my wavering 'thoughts, called in my reaſon, and 'pleaded in his look, his air, his words, 'ſo ſtrongly for duty, that it was almoſt impoſſible to reſiſt it's impulſes. "O Lucius!" ſaid he, in a moſt diſtreſsful tone. "You ſee I can have "no proſpect of relief—No; I have not "the leaſt hope, the leaſt glimmering "hope, of ever procuring my liberty." 'Here preſſing my hand, and giving 'me a look painfully affectionate—"It "is a melancholy thought," continued 'he; "the dreary horrors of a priſon "are extremely ſhocking; they diſarm "my reſolutions, and make a coward "of me! But I have nobody to reproach but myſelf. To be buried "alive, to be for ever deprived of that "wholeſome air, which the meaneſt "ſlaves breathe at liberty! Nay, don't "look ſo tenderly upon me!" continued he, preſſing my hand again; and

'then

'then looking at me, with the utmoſt 'exceſs of paternal affection, he added, "Will you not come to ſee me?" I 'could bear no more: theſe laſt words 'pierced through my ſoul. "Don't, "pray don't, Sir, diſtract me with theſe "dreadful thoughts," interrupted I; "you ſhall not go to priſon—I am re-"ſolved you ſhan't."—"What do you "mean?" returned he; "I muſt. I "have no friend to aſſiſt me."—"What "am I then?" cried I; "you ſhall not, "if my life or fortune can prevent it. "I will not, I cannot ſee you ſo wretch-"ed!"—"Mention it no more," re-'turned he, "I won't hear of ſuch a "propoſal. Your whole fortune would "ſcarcely be ſufficient. No, no; you "ſhan't ruin yourſelf for me. I will "not purchaſe my liberty at ſo dear a "price as your happineſs. Think what "it is you propoſe; think of Felicia. "Ah! that name will ſurely call you "back to reaſon; you need but conſult "your own heart to find that it is ſhe, "not I, that muſt render you happy. "Leave me then to the miſeries I have "brought upon myſelf. Death will "ſoon put an end to them all. But O! "how painful is this ſituation, in which "death, ſo terrible to nature, is my "only relief! A relief do I call it? "Would it be a relief to me? No, I "fear not; there is ſomething after "death more dreadful than death it-"ſelf, more terrible than all I ſuffer. "O how happy is the virtuous man to "whom the grim monſter appears with "an angel's face, with the ſmiles of "immortal beauty! To me it is covered "with a dreary gloom that ſhoots terror "through my ſoul! But when you are "happy, Lucius, think of me; viſit "me in my grave, my priſon."—"O "my father! my dear, dear father!" 'cried I, interrupting him again, "Why will you not hear me? Why "do you give way to ſuch cruel "thoughts? Shall I not have the li-"berty of diſpoſing of my own? I have "already thought of what I loſe in for-"ſaking the gentle Felicia. I know "my felicity is interwoven with hers. "I know that our marriage, on which "the happineſs of my life depends, will "never be concluded, yet I have made "my choice. There is ſomething ſo "horrible in the apprehenſions of ſeeing "you a priſoner, that I cannot bear to "think of it. There are no circum-"ſtances, in which ſuch a misfortune "to you would not render me wretched. "Are you not my father, and ſhall "not nature plead for you? Do you "think me a ſon, and yet believe me "capable of ſtruggling againſt my "duty?—my duty to my father?—a "father from whom I have received "numberleſs obligations, that call for "returns of gratitude and love? Think "what my mother will feel, when ſhe "hears of your diſtreſs; and though I "have not the power to ſhake your re-"ſolutions by my entreaties to accept "of what I offer you, let her tears, let "her deſpair, touch your heart. Marilla "too will be diſtracted with grief; and "I know her ſo well, that were ſhe of "age, ſhe would gladly make you the "ſame offer that I do now. Indeed, "Sir, we can none of us feel more "miſery than in ſeeing you miſerable." —"Good God!" cried my father, 'with uplifted hands, "teach me how "to act. Never did my conduct, in "my calmeſt intervals of reflection, "appear ſo black as it does now. O "Lucius! I am aſhamed of thinking "how I have injured you. Your kind-"neſs is more inſupportable than all "my ſufferings. How ſeverely does "all this goodneſs reproach me! this "undeſerved goodneſs! It touches me "to the quick; it makes a monſter of "me!"—"I beg pardon, Sir," re-'plied I, "if I have done any thing to "occaſion theſe cruel reflections. In "ſerving you I only do my duty."— "But ah! it is a painful duty," inter-'rupted he; "I know it is; your for-"tune is your ſmalleſt loſs. If I accept "of it, I deprive you of Felicia's for-"tune too; and, what is infinitely worſe "to a mind like yours, I deprive you "of Felicia! I might have given you a "ſplendid eſtate; but, inſtead of that, "to—— O! how unlike a father, who, "inſtead of a curſe, ought to be a bleſ-"ſing to his family! My conduct has "been an outrage againſt nature, a "violation of the deareſt privileges of a "parent; I have forgot the obligations "of the huſband, the father, and the "friend. Thy mother too! How miſer-"able have I made her! I have been "the ruin of all who have loved me; "the ruin of my wife and children— "the ruin of thee! Sad effect of vice!

'how

" how dearly do I pay for my folly and " madneſs!"

Here he pauſed; and, I dare ſay, it is not difficult, Madam, for you to imagine the tender, the generous, the noble ſentiments, the relation of this affecting conteſt produced. Methought there was ſomething ſo heroick, ſo dutiful, and ſo diſintereſted, in this part of his behaviour, that I could not help ſecretly applauding him. But now my father let me ſee that he was of the ſame opinion as myſelf, by openly diſcovering his ſentiments: for Lucius no ſooner gave him leave to ſpeak, by a pauſe in which he ſeemed to recollect himſelf, than my father, as if eager to put him out of his pain, took hold of his hand, and giving it an affectionate ſhake—'Generous 'youth,' cried he, 'this was nobly 'done! You are more my ſon than 'ever. I ſhall think myſelf happy in 'being allied to a perſon of ſuch worth. 'How greatly do theſe tears become 'you! this ſoft adoption of another's 'ſorrow: this exceſs of humanity, which 'the ſavage mind cannot (or at leaſt will 'not) feel, is the trueſt mark to know 'the brave, the generous heart by. Ac'tions like theſe give a perfect inſight 'into characters; and while they add a 'dignity to the higheſt ſtations, they 'ſpread a luſtre that can never be equal'ed by all the pride of wealth, the pomp 'of titles, or the falſe glitter of ſucceſs'ful ambition. Dear Lucius! how 'happy will my daughter be in ſo wor'thy a huſband!'

This was uttered in that peculiar tone in which we always expreſs ourſelves, when the full heart, burthened under it's joy, breaks forth into an unreſtrained tranſport, into elevated ſurprize and generous affection. While he ſpoke, the tears ſtarted afreſh into his eyes, and added an endearing tenderneſs to the ſmile of gladneſs which enlivened his countenance. His ſoul beamed in his looks, and diſcovered a mind ſoftened, delighted, and raiſed above itſelf, while I dwelt upon each word he uttered, and with a moſt charming extaſy aſſented to the juſtice of his praiſes. As to Lucius, he ſeemed all this while as if awaking from a troubleſome dream; while ſurprize, gratitude, and a modeſt joy, diſperſed the clouds of deſpair which hung on his brow. He looked at my father, he looked at me: the ſame paſſions were viſible in both our faces, only I fancy mine had an air of greater ſoftneſs. He then turned his eyes again to my father, and preſſing his hand—'I am amazed, 'Sir,' cried he: 'What can this good'neſs mean? Can you really propoſe to 'marry Felicia to a perſon without a 'fortune? to one ſunk into indigence? 'Sure it is impoſſible! Have you forgot 'that our family depends upon my ſup'port? and can you reſolve that Felicia's 'eſtate, inſtead of being augmented by 'her marriage, ſhould be applied to 'remove foreign cares, and foreign 'wants?'

'Come, come, Lucius,' returned my father, ſmiling, 'don't exaggerate the 'diſadvantages of your circumſtances. 'This laſt inſtance of filial piety ſhews 'a greatneſs of ſoul, that not only fills 'me with ſurprize, but extremely en'dears you to me. The better I know 'you, the more I admire your virtue; 'and, to be as little behind you as poſ'ſible in point of generoſity, I promiſe 'not only to conſult your felicity, but 'the happineſs of all that are dear to 'you. But pray proceed; for I long 'to know the concluſion of theſe affect'ing incidents.'

'Dear Sir,' cried the engaging youth, with a ſparkling joy ſwelling into rapture; 'dear Sir, teach me how to ac'knowledge your goodneſs; I would be 'grateful, but yet cannot expreſs my 'gratitude. My heart feels it all; feels 'it too ſenſibly to be expreſſed. O my 'dear, my lovely Felicia!' cried he, ariſing haſtily, running to me, and giving me an eager, affectionate embrace; while my father could not forbear laughing at this natural tranſport, this ſudden impulſe of affection; nor could I help being extremely delighted with it. With extaſy he preſſed my hand to his boſom; his eyes ſpoke unutterable things. But having indulged for near a minute this ſudden tranſport of joy, he returned to his chair, and concluded the ſtory of his father's misfortunes; but he neither ſufficiently entered into the ſubject, nor dwelt, as before, upon the moſt melting circumſtances. His own paſt ſorrow and his father's were ſwallowed up by the joy of the preſent moment. He told us that, after many arguments, his father at laſt conſented to his propoſal, but not without the ſevereſt reproaches upon the madneſs of his own conduct. His creditors

creditors were ſent for; when offering a handſome compoſition, which was readily accepted, their affairs were concluded the next day: and, in ſhort, that his misfortune, with the tenderneſs of Sophronia and Marilla, had wrought the moſt happy change in his conduct; a circumſtance which, as it gave Lucius the higheſt pleaſure, he mentioned with peculiar ſatisfaction.

As ſoon as he had done, my father renewed the friendly proofs he had given him of his affection, and promiſed to uſe his endeavours to make us as happy as poſſible; ſo that, before dinner, we were more firmly united than ever. What a delightful change in our affairs! In two days more, my circumſtances and manner of life will be changed; ſo that, when I write next, you will find me in a different claſs of mortals: but in whatever ſtate I may be, if you do me juſtice, you will believe me to be unalterably yours,

FELICIA.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

LETTER XXV.

YOU wonder, Madam, at my ſilence; but the continual perſecution of a number of viſitors has, for ſome time paſt, deprived me of every opportunity of retirement: ſo that, unleſs I could have found in my heart to have ſent you a letter, with only *Madam*, at the top; *I am married*, a little lower; and *your humble ſervant*, at the bottom; I was indiſpenſably obliged to defer writing till I could find leiſure to be more particular.

My ſtory, Madam, is now finiſhed: I have been married theſe three weeks; and, from the ſerene tranquil ſtate I am in at preſent, you have no reaſon to expect any more romantick adventures. I have nothing now to do with the affecting ſcenes of fond diſtreſs, the pangs of jealouſy, or the fears of incurring a father's diſpleaſure. My life begins to move on in an even ſtream, my paſſions are all huſhed into a ſweet ſerenity: regularity and order, peace and tranquillity, have taken up their reſidence in our happy dwelling. Can I give you, my dear friend, a more perfect picture of the higheſt degree of conjugal felicity, or repreſent a happineſs more intenſely charming? It is true, my huſband—O the aukward name!—has no right honourable titles to grace my ſtory, and give a dignity to my newly-acquired ſtation; but this is an honour that I can freely reſign to you without the leaſt degree of envy; nor will your ladyſhip think me ſtupid, though I tell you, that I never in my life had an ambition of this kind. Theſe all-potent words, theſe raviſhing ſounds of dignity, theſe pompous ſyllables, ſo full of nameleſs charms, after which ſo many ſigh and languiſh in vain, appear of no moment: and I am as content with the homely title of Mrs. *Manly*, as any other perſon can be with the more diſtinguiſhed epithet of *my Lady*. But whither am I rambling? Don't you think matrimony has turned my brain? I have been preaching ſo long upon my humility, that I had almoſt forgot I was to give you an account of my affairs. To return, then, at laſt, to my ſtory.

The day before I was united to my dear Lucius, by thoſe indiſſoluble bonds which render our happineſs as ſecure as our lives, his father came to pay us a viſit. We received him with that deference which is due to ſo near a relation; while his reformation greatly heightened the reſpect my father thought himſelf obliged to pay him. And indeed, whatever follies he had formerly been guilty of, he did not at this time want any qualification to recommend him to the eſteem of a good man; for his ſentiments now ſhewed that he deſerved it. He is really a gentleman of fine ſenſe, of an eaſy agreeable addreſs, and one that perfectly knows the world; nor does he ſeem to have wanted any natural advantage for making a ſhining figure in it. As all my father's prejudices were now removed, they ſoon grew intimate; and Mr. Manly expreſſed his acknowledgments for my father's generoſity to his ſon, with all the gratitude that could be inſpired by the tender overflowings of

paternal affection; while my father returned his compliments with an air of the utmoſt complacence and ſatisfaction. How much does a man of fine ſenſe loſe by his vices! His abilities, which raiſe him above his neighbours, are either entirely ſuſpended, or render him more ingeniouſly infamous, more generally hated and deſpiſed; but he is no ſooner reformed, than, if his reaſon is not impaired by brutal indulgence, and a continued debauch—which, alas! is too often the caſe—his new-recovered virtues, poliſhed by repentance, blaze out with a double luſtre, and receive unutterable graces from the ſudden ſublimity of his conceptions.

Mr. Manly's acknowledgments were, however, too grave for the preſent ſituation of our affairs, and affected us, as well as himſelf, too much, for us to ſuffer him to proceed. We, therefore, as ſoon as poſſible gave a turn to this part of the converſation; and Lucius, Melliſont, and Amelia, entering the room immediately after, prevented it's being reſumed, and, at the ſame time, recovered that chearfulneſs which had been interrupted by this too tender ſubject. The countenances of all our friends had an air of gaiety, which broke out into decent mirth; while Amelia and I were, by far, the dulleſt part of the company. They at laſt retired; when my good friend attending me to my chamber, and ſeating herſelf by me—'How 'is it with you Felicia?' ſaid ſhe, ſmiling. 'I muſt confeſs myſelf a ſad fool; 'for though no converſation could poſſibly be more engaging than that in 'which we have ſpent the day, I have 'wiſhed a thouſand times for an opportunity of being alone. Methought I 'wanted to indulge at leiſure my own 'thoughts; though, I can aſſure you, 'they were none of the moſt agreeable. 'My ſpirits have been ſtrangely oppreſſed; and, notwithſtanding my endeavouring to join in the diſcourſe, I 'have been every moment at church repeating after the parſon, and thinking what a ſilly aukward figure I ſhall 'make there to-morrow. Bleſs me! 'what a coward am I grown! I ſhall 'certainly behave like a natural.'—'O, never mind it;' replied I, with a malicious pleaſure, at finding her as weak as myſelf; 'depend upon it, I ſhall 'keep you in countenance.'—'I am ſo 'terrified at the ſolemnity of the ceremony, that I heartily wiſh it was over. 'I dread it as ſomething mighty formidable, and can hardly think of it without trembling.'—'But ſuppoſe now,' added I, 'we ſhould take the pains to 'read it over together?'—'Agreed,' replied ſhe, running into my cloſet, and returning immediately with my prayer-book: 'Come, let us begin,' added ſhe, 'it will be more familiar to us to-morrow.' Here we began, making our remarks as we proceeded. In ſhort, we read over the whole ceremonial with the utmoſt attention; which, as we lengthened it out with abundance of comments, and little diſputes upon ſome particulars which we did not underſtand, took up a conſiderable time.

Having now gratified our curioſity, we wiſhed each other a good night, and Amelia left me; but ſhe was hardly out of my room, when returning with a ſmile on her countenance—'I am come,' ſaid ſhe, 'to aſk your conſent to let me 'lie with you. I am perſuaded, that 'we are neither of us in a diſpoſition to 'give way to ſleep. The hours would 'paſs on very heavily, were we alone; 'let us then divert ourſelves as agreeably 'as we can.'—'With all my heart, my 'dear,' ſaid I, extremely pleaſed with her propoſal: 'we will indulge our re'flections with the greateſt freedom.'

Upon this we undreſſed, and went to bed. But I will not trouble your ladyſhip with the various topicks of our diſcourſe; it is ſufficient to ſay, that we talked till morning, when, ſhaking off the drowſineſs that then began inſenſibly to ſteal upon us, we aroſe; but had hardly finiſhed the agreeable taſk of dreſſing each other, when ſomebody rapping ſoftly at the door, Amelia opened it, and our two lovers appeared. They ſaluted us with an air of tranſport; telling us, that as they had ſeen us at the window, they could not forbear coming to wiſh us joy on the arrival of this happy morning. 'This, my dear,' ſaid Lucius, 'is the day from whence I ſhall date 'the completion of my happineſs; a 'day, that, I hope, we ſhall neither of 'us ever think of without delight. O 'my Felicia! how happy are you go'ing to make me!' Here he gently preſſed my hand, and gave me a look ſo extremely tender, that I could not help baniſhing every impertinent thought, to ſhare in his tranſport; I even returned the charming preſſure, and ſqueezed his hand,

hand, with a freedom I had never indulged before. 'Sure,' ſaid I, 'this 'muſt be a happy union, where both 'ſo ardently wiſh to promote each other's 'felicity!'—'O my dear!' cried he, in an extaſy, 'how ſhall I merit this ſweet 'exceſs of goodneſs!'

Mellifont, I ſuppoſe, was entertaining Amelia in the ſame paſſionate ſtrain; but I was not at leiſure to attend either to their words or behaviour; however, I remember that they both looked extremely pleaſed. We went down to breakfaſt; when Mr. Manly and my father joined with my aunt in the moſt affectionate wiſhes for the continuance of our happineſs; at the ſame time letting us know that a coach was ready to carry us, as ſoon as we had drank our chocolate, to a ſmall village, at a few miles diſtance, where a clergyman waited to join our hands.

At the mention of the coach and clergyman, my uneaſineſs returned. I trembled, as if afraid of the awful ceremony; while Mellifont, drawing the common prayer out of his pocket, which he had found in my room, and taken up unobſerved, increaſed my diſorder, by ſhewing my father in what place he found it open upon the table. This was a circumſtance which created a deal of mirth among the old people; who, however, unanimouſly agreed that we could not have ſpent our time better, than in thus ſtudying the nature of thoſe engagements we were going to enter into: to which my aunt added—'Indeed, I think my 'niece and my daughter ought to be com-'mended, inſtead of being laughed at; 'for, as marriage is one of the moſt im-'portant ſteps we can take in life; ſince 'our happineſs, both in this and a fu-'ture ſtate, in a great meaſure depends 'upon it; they could not, at this time, 'have employed their thoughts on a 'more intereſting ſubject, than the 'ſolemn promiſes by which they are go-'ing to bind themſelves.'

Several other things were ſaid upon the ſame ſubject, which took up good part of the time we were at breakfaſt; and we were juſt ready to ſtep into the coach, when Mellifont, to my no ſmall ſatisfaction, propoſed our ſending for the clergyman to perform the ceremony here. Lucius caſting a glance at me, to ſee if I approved the motion, immediately ſeconded his friend; and, though my aunt diſapproved of it, as a thing uncuſtomary in this part of the country, we had the happineſs to carry it againſt her, by my father's joining on our ſide. We, therefore, took our ſeats again, and one of the coaches was ſent away for the reverend gentleman.

I ſhall not attempt, my dear friend, to repeat the chat that filled up this interval. I was in a very odd ſituation; but in leſs than two hours time, we were informed that the coach was returned, and ſoon after ſaw the divine enter the room, accompanied by Sophronia and Marilla, who had waited for us at church. The glaſs having gone once round, we aroſe, and went into a back parlour facing the garden; I, trembling with fear, held by my father's arm, and Amelia by my aunt's; when cuſhions being brought in, the ſolemn ſervice began. But it would be impertinent for me minutely to deſcribe my behaviour on this occaſion, which, however, was not altogether ſo ridiculous as I expected; only this I muſt ſay, that I repeated the words, *honour and obey*, as diſtinctly as the reſt: nor did Amelia, any more than I, ſcruple to pronounce thoſe formidable ſounds. My heart readily aſſented to every thing: my whole ſoul was loſt in devotion, and every faculty of it employed in the ſervice.

You find, Madam, I am now entered into the venerable ſtate of wedlock; but, whatever change I have undergone in my manner of life, I do myſelf the honour to aſſure you, that I was never more, than I am at preſent, your ladyſhip's ſincereſt friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXVI.

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR congratulations on our marriage are ſo very obliging, that I cannot defer my acknowledgments without deſerving the imputation of ingratitude, a crime that my ſoul moſt abhors; and therefore, as I am as ſenſible as poſſible of your goodneſs, I embrace this firſt opportunity of telling you ſo. O my friend! what a ſweet addition do your praiſes give to the ſecret applauſe with which I regard my happy choice! Lucius is, indeed, worthy of all you have ſaid in his favour; his mind

is truly noble, and all his ſoul as much the object of my admiration as my love.

In my laſt, Madam, I broke off a little abruptly at the concluſion of that ſolemn ceremony which initiated me into a different claſs of mortals: but, as I have ſeveral things to relate, which, I flatter myſelf, may ſerve to amuſe and entertain you, I will now reſume the thread of my ſtory.

When all was over, my heart, which had hitherto been extremely oppreſſed, began to beat more freely. Lucius embraced me, and, with eyes filled with a melting ſoftneſs, cried—'Now, my dear, 'I may be ſo happy as to call you my 'wife. Dear name! may you never 'think of it without pleaſure!' The reſt of the company embraced us in their turn; and paid us the grateful compliments which burſt from hearts ſtruggling under an exceſs of affection and tender joy. Nor did Lucius's father, who had given away Amelia, appear leſs affected with our common happineſs than mine. In ſhort, every face glowed with ſatisfaction, while they ſtrove to outdo each other in their careſſes and teſtimonies of regard.

We now adjourned to another room, where a ſide-board was ſet with wines and fruit; when my aunt inſiſted upon my drinking a glaſs to raiſe my ſpirits, which Amelia, after my example, complied with. The clergyman, who is one of the moſt facetious gentlemen upon earth, told us abundance of agreeable ſtories, with ſo much humour, that he frequently ſet the whole company in a laugh; nor could Amelia and I forbear joining in the general mirth. We inſenſibly returned to ourſelves; and, before dinner, were able to bear a part in the converſation. The reverend divine filled his pipe, had a tankard of old October to himſelf, and, by his wit and good temper, let us ſee that he did not think an innocent mirth at all inconſiſtent with the ſtricteſt piety. And it is worthy of obſervation, that, notwithſtanding the extraordinary gaiety of the gentlemen, not the leaſt word eſcaped them on this occaſion, that could offend the chaſteſt ear. Lucius and Mellifont were in high ſpirits; but our fathers appeared tranſported above themſelves; they had a peculiar ſatisfaction in their looks, while every geſture and every glance expreſſed the glad heart of a fond parent. But theſe are things too delicate to be deſcribed. Sophronia and my aunt had much the ſame elevated joy, which, whenever they endeavoured to expreſs it, ſeemed too big for utterance. What a delightful circumſtance, to think that our happineſs is diffuſed, in ſo charming a manner, to thoſe who are moſt dear to us!

Dinner being over, and the ſervants ordered to withdraw, my father preſented Lucius with the writings belonging to the greater part of his eſtate. 'As I 'have given you the perſon of my 'daughter, and intruſted her future fe'licity in your hands,' ſaid he, with an air of open confidence, 'I make no 'ſcruple of giving you the unlimited 'poſſeſſion of what is leſs dear to me. 'It would be an injury to you, my ſon, '(for now I may have the pleaſure of 'calling you by this affectionate name) 'and ſhew me too little moved by your 'noble and generous ſentiments, ſhould 'I make you depend on my daughter 'for the enjoyment of any of the ele'gancies of life. I, therefore, with the 'greateſt ſatisfaction, rely on your 'virtue and prudence to manage the 'eſtate, which, as the huſband of my 'Felicia, you have a right to partake of, 'in ſuch a manner as to promote your 'mutual happineſs.'—'Dear Sir,' ſaid Lucius, interrupting him, 'you are 'pleaſed to oppreſs me with your good'neſs; but, while I would expreſs my 'grateful acknowledgments, I muſt 'beg you not to ſtraiten yourſelf, to 'add——' 'No, no,' interrupted my father, in his turn, 'you need not give 'yourſelf any pain on my account. I 'have reſerved to myſelf an eaſy com'petence, ſufficient to ſupport the cha'racter I have always borne in life, and 'to ſupply all the exigences incident 'to the decline of it. A parent, in my 'opinion,' added he, ſmiling, 'ſhould 'never be ſo profuſe of his wealth, as 'to deprive himſelf of the capacity of 'living as he pleaſes without the aſſiſt'ance of his children; and, indeed, 'none that deſerve this indulgence can 'be pleaſed with ſeeing ſuch a prepoſ'terous, ſuch an unnatural dependence. 'I conſider you both as my children, 'your intereſts are now become inſe'parable; and, therefore, I have made 'no reſerve for my daughter: the con'vincing proofs I have received of the 'greatneſs of your mind, make all ſuch

'precautions

'precautions unneceſſary. Nor will Fe-
'licia, I am perſuaded, be diſpleaſed
'that I have given all to you.'—'Why
'ſo, Sir?' interpoſed I; 'do you really
'think it no mortification to refuſe me
'the pleaſure of doing juſtice to Mr.
'Manly's merit, by giving him ſo con-
'ſiderable a proof of my regard, as it
'would be, to make him a preſent of
'a fine jointure, as ſoon as I had it in
'my poſſeſſion? How many agreeable
'things might I have heard him ſay to
'me on this occaſion! But,' ſeriouſly added I, 'I am altogether as well pleaſed
'as it is; and I aſſure you, you could
'not have given me greater pleaſure
'than you have now done.'

The unexpected vivacity of this reply cauſed a general ſmile. Lucius bowed his head, and ſeemed particularly pleaſed with it; indeed, he had reaſon to be ſo. His looks ſhewed that he was charmed with my father's behaviour; for, though he had been ſenſible that he really gained nothing, by this inſtance of his confidence, in his integrity and affection to me; yet, as it was an agreeable proof of the great ſhare he had of his eſteem, it could not fail of giving him the higheſt ſatisfaction. We now joined in the warmeſt expreſſions of gratitude to this indulgent parent; whilſt I, much leſs embarraſſed on this occaſion than this dear man, endeavoured to find terms capable of expreſſing, in ſome meaſure, the fulneſs of his heart.

My father put an end to our acknowledgments, by turning to my father-in-law, and making him a preſent, anſwerable to the goodneſs of his own diſpoſition. It was a little eſtate of about two hundred a year, which is to return to us after his and Sophronia's deceaſe, and which they did not receive without thanking him with tears of gratitude; but in the moment when they ſeemed labouring under a ſurprize which ſtruck them dumb, and rendered them incapable of expreſſing themſelves, Mellifont, who had left us a few minutes before, returned, and, deſiring to know if we had done with buſineſs, introduced a band of muſick; and, by this means, prevented thoſe affecting acknowledgments, which, however agreeable, are always attended with ſome pain. The day was ſpent in innocent gaiety and mirth, and with that peculiar ſatisfaction which the happy occaſion was adapted to inſpire, amongſt the moſt intimate and cordial friends.

The next morning, while we were at breakfaſt, my aunt told us, that ſhe expected a viſit from ſome of the neighbouring gentlemen and ladies, to congratulate us on this happy union. 'Some
'of them,' added ſhe, laughing, 'as
'they affect to appear men of wit, will,
'I don't doubt, be fond of diſplaying
'it, in a manner that will not be very
'agreeable to the modeſty of either my
'niece or daughter; and, therefore, to
'ſave their bluſhes for the preſent, ſup-
'poſe they ſhould take an airing till din-
'ner?'—'I was juſt going to make the
'ſame propoſal,' ſaid my father, 'though
'from a different reaſon. The day is
'exceeding fine, and I ſhould be glad
'of the pleaſure of Mr. Manly's com-
'pany, without the fear of having our
'converſation interrupted.' Lucius thanked him for the honour he did him; and the coach being ſoon ready, we ſtepped in, leaving Mellifont with Amelia, who promiſed to follow us; we having before let them know the road we propoſed to take. My father began the converſation, by the moſt tender expreſſion of his affection. 'My dear Fe-
'licia,' ſaid he, 'how great is my joy
'to ſee you ſo happy! You are married
'to a man of ſenſe and probity; to a
'man, whom I ſhall love as a ſon, and
'eſteem as a worthy friend. I wiſh you
'could both know how happy a father
'you have made me.'—'Dear Sir,' ſaid Lucius, 'I have not words to ex-
'preſs the leaſt part of that gratitude I
'feel for your goodneſs. Your hap-
'pineſs, as it ariſes from ours, ought
'to increaſe it too. I love you, as the
'tender father who gave me being. You
'are more than a father, you give me
'happineſs.' Here he took hold of my hand; and then looking again at my father—'O Sir,' continued he, with a full heart, 'let me thank you for this,
'the deareſt of all your gifts!'

'You are very welcome,' replied my father, with a ſmile; 'I hope my daugh-
'ter will prove herſelf worthy of ſuch
'a huſband. May God bleſs you both!
'You are now entered into a new ſcene
'of life, the very different cares, the
'different duties of which, require the
'exerciſe of very different abilities. My
'dear Lucius, I approve your huma-
'nity, that benevolence which will na-

'turally

'turally prompt you to pity and relieve 'the diſtreſſed; but even this affection, 'amiable as it is, is one of the moſt 'dangerous of all that the mind of man 'is ſenſible to. There are faults which 'ariſe even from goodneſs of heart, 'faults attended with worſe conſe-'quences than thoſe of cruelty and 'brutal ill-nature. Pity has ruined 'thouſands, men of the moſt refined 'ſenſe, and of the greateſt abilities; and 'when theſe are ruined, the ignorant 'and the ill-natured, proud of an op-'portunity of revenging the ſuperiority 'of their acquired endowments, are ſure 'to treat them with double contempt. 'And indeed, men of great humanity, 'though of the beſt ſenſe, frequently 'err in the plaineſt caſes; even where 'one, but a degree above a natural, 'would not be deceived. This appears 'ſtrange, yet it is an obſervation con-'firmed by daily experience. Theſe 'are, frequently, not only the worſt 'œconomiſts, but they are drawn into 'the weakeſt and moſt childiſh engage-'ments, where inevitable ruin is almoſt 'the natural conſequence. Yet the rea-'ſon of this is, perhaps, not hard to 'diſcover. Thoſe perſons whoſe 'thoughts are taken up with refined 'ſpeculations, commonly know but 'little of the world; they may be verſed, 'indeed, in prudential maxims, but 'there will always be a vaſt difference 'between theſe and truths founded on 'experience. A man of an open, be-'nevolent diſpoſition, while conſcious of 'the integrity of his own heart, is leſs 'inclined to ſuſpicion than others of 'more contracted views; he loves to 'think well of mankind, and frequently 'thinks better of individuals than they 'deſerve. But when pity has taken poſ-'ſeſſion of the heart—pity, a paſſion ſo 'nearly allied to love, that, like it, it 'baniſhes from the mind every inju-'rious idea—it is almoſt incapable of ſu-'ſpicion; it reflects not on poſſible con-'ſequences; or, if theſe do ariſe in the 'mind, they paſs away unregarded, 'and make too ſlight an impreſſion to 'prove effectual. The man of huma-'nity finds it much eaſier to act from 'paſſion than from reaſon; he is preſſed 'forwards by the impulſe of a lively 'imagination, filled with the advan-'tages that will attend the diſtreſſed per-'ſon on his compliance with his deſires; 'and therefore, when he is ſolicited from 'without, and, at the ſame time, prompt-'ed from within, by the impulſes of a 'generous and affected heart, there is 'no wonder if he finds a difficulty in 'ſaying *no*. There are circumſtances, 'in which a young man will find it ex-'tremely hard to pronounce this little 'monoſyllable; and, in order to do it, 'when neceſſary, he will be obliged to 'practiſe a great deal of ſelf-denial; 'but it is a mortification ſometimes ab-'ſolutely neceſſary. We have a kind 'of proverb which adviſes us "to "think all men rogues, till we find "them honeſt."

Lucius ſat all this while with his eyes fixed on my father in the utmoſt atten-tion; but being now unable to contain himſelf any longer, he cried out—'I 'dare ſay, Sir, the firſt perſon who made 'uſe of this proverb, was a diſhoneſt 'man himſelf. What a life of ſuſpi-'cion and diſtruſt! Can he be a friend 'to mankind? Can he have any com-'placency in his fellow-creatures, who 'looks upon them as a neſt of vipers; 'as villains, who only wait for an op-'portunity to rob or impoſe upon him?'

'No,' cried my father, interrupting him in his turn, 'I did not mention 'this proverb by way of approbation, 'as you would ſoon have found, had 'you ſuffered me to proceed; for though 'it is a ſure way to prevent being im-'poſed upon, yet it is unjuſt, and con-'ſequently criminal. It is a much more 'chriſtian diſpoſition, at leaſt, to believe 'every man honeſt, till we have reaſon 'to think him a villain: but, never-'theleſs, if we know the world, we 'ſhall ſee the neceſſity of uſing every 'proper precaution to ſecure ourſelves. 'Your benevolence, I allow, ought to 'ſhew itſelf in real acts of kindneſs, but 'it ſhould be in ſuch acts as reaſon and 'prudence will warrant; a beneficence 'generous and diffuſive, and, at the 'ſame time, conſiſtent with prudence 'and the rules of juſt œconomy. Let 'me perſuade you to be cautious of ſign-'ing your name. Learn boldly to re-'fuſe what would be improper for you 'to grant; and, having once refuſed, 'let no importunity prevail upon you to 'act contrary to your judgment. Ne-'ver let your ſteward's accounts paſs 'unexamined, nor ſuffer him to diſtreſs 'a tenant without ſeeing the poor man 'yourſelf.'

Here my father paused; when Lucius, thanking him for his advice, and the other coach, with Mellifont and Amelia, driv-

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ing to the ſide of ours, the converſation turned on indifferent ſubjects. It is now time to conclude this long letter; but I muſt firſt do myſelf the honour to aſſure your ladyſhip, that nothing but the pleaſure of your company can add to the felicity of your moſt affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXVII.

DEAR MADAM,

IN my laſt, if I am not miſtaken, I told you, that my aunt propoſed our taking an airing before dinner, to avoid the impertinence of ſome country gentlemen, whom, it ſeems, ſhe had reaſon to expect; as they had early in the morning ſent her word, that they would do themſelves the honour of paying her a viſit, to congratulate Amelia and me on our happineſs. Their perſons, though not their characters, were unknown to me; and though Amelia and her mother had ſeen them before, yet, as they had no acquaintance in the family, we all looked upon this as an unwelcome intruſion; which, on account of their birth and fortune, we were obliged to overlook, and they, doubtleſs, imagined us very much honoured by a viſit which we would very gladly have diſpenſed with. For my part, the very idea of being obliged to bear with their impertinence gave a damp to my ſatisfaction; and, upon my return, I could not help wiſhing very heartily that my aunt might be miſtaken; a wiſh that I the more readily indulged, as I did not then know her reaſon for expecting them. But this was both vain and fruitleſs; for at ſome diſtance we could obſerve a number of ſpruce ſervants, in very rich liveries; and, upon our entering the court, our ears were ſaluted, or rather ſtunned, with a confuſed noiſe, which iſſued from the window of a room adjoining to the hall. One was ſinging, with a loud, harſh, and diſagreeable voice; while two or three others, all talking at the ſame time, were engaged in a warm diſpute, each ſeeming deſirous to gain a victory rather by the ſtrength of his lungs than of his arguments, and to ſtruggle to outvie the reſt in noiſe. What a jargon was here! Had our ears been entertained with the diſmal thrum of the bladder and ſtring, or had we been welcomed home by a concert of catcalls, I could not have formed an idea of a more diſguſting entertainment, than I now expected to receive from the company of thoſe country ſquires.

My father frowned, and Lucius ſeemed heartily vexed, but neither of them ſpoke a word: however, the coach no ſooner drove up to the door, than the revel-rout ceaſed; and the coach-door being opened, Lucius leaped out, and, preſenting his hand, helped me to alight, in ſpite of half a dozen young rakes, who rudely endeavoured to puſh before him, and all of whom ſeemed deſirous of doing me this honour. I was next obliged to ſuffer a diſagreeable ſalute from each; which the laſt, being already half drunk, rendered, if poſſible, more diſtaſteful, by belching in my face: but it was a ceremony I was forced to ſubmit to, and good manners made me diſguiſe my reluctance; while my father, being entirely unknown, ſtood by, with Lucius and my aunt, with the appearance of unconcerned ſpectators.

This being performed, with as ill a grace as poſſible, and a wretched compliment beſtowed upon me from each, they all ran, with the ſame familiar air, to the other coach; and Mellifont, having ſet his foot on the ground, to my no ſmall ſurprize, was ſurrounded by two or three of the moſt forward; one of which, ſhaking him by the hand, cried—'Damn 'ye, ye ſtrong-back'd dog, I wiſh you 'joy!' Nor were the compliments of the others much more polite; they wondered where the devil he had been, but could never dream that he had been poaching. Amelia having, after my example, gone through the nauſeous ceremonial, we all went in together: but, as we were paſſing through the hall, I obſerved one of the moſt diſagreeable wretches I ever beheld: a tall, lean, raw, lank, ugly fellow, with a long face and hollow eyes, dreſſed in a green frock and laced waiſtcoat; who, ſwinging his arms, ran to Mellifont, and giving him a luſty blow on the ſhoulder, and at the ſame time ſeizing faſt hold of a button, cried—'Is that grave ſon of a bitch he?' nodding at Lucius; and then added he—'Zoons! I have a good mind to make 'him a cuckold—damn me if I have 'not!' Though he ſpoke pretty low, Lucius overheard him; and, letting go my hand, ſtepped up to him, and immediately ſeizing hold of his noſe, which

was

was none of the ſhorteſt, led him to me, and inſiſted upon his aſking my pardon, which he did without heſitation; whilſt I, trembling with fear, readily gave him abſolution; when, beſtowing a hearty curſe upon Lucius, and writhing his face into ſeveral ugly contortions, I ſuppoſe to bring his noſe into due form, he turned, with a ſilly grin, to his companions, and, with a ſheepiſh air of affected pleaſantry, endeavoured to laugh it off as a joke; though he ſaid it was a curſed queer joke, and he hardly knew whether it was in jeſt or earneſt.

You can hardly conceive, Madam, the terror I was in; for I immediately dreaded, that the reſentment of all his companions would fall upon Lucius, whom I, therefore, apprehended to be in danger: but I was in a moment relieved from my fears; for, to my no ſmall ſurprize and ſatisfaction, they all ſet up a loud laugh, and, clapping their hands, capered about the hall with an air of triumphant ſatisfaction; and my father, who had at firſt put his hand to his ſword, drew it back with a ſmile.

Nothing now was heard but applauſes on Lucius, who was regarded as a hero; and the repetition of I—I—I—, from two or three, running about, and mimicking the look, geſture, and ſnuffle of their companion, while Lucius led him by the noſe; a kind of wit, which, as it was perfectly agreeable to their talents, ſeemed to give them the higheſt delight.

As ſoon as they were conducted to another room, we ſtepped into the parlour, which they had left upon our return home, the floor of which was pretty well ſtrewed with broken glaſſes; when my father obſerved to Lucius, that if theſe were his friend's companions, he could not help forming a very bad opinion both of his taſte and morals. Whether Lucius would have vindicated Mellifont or not, I cannot tell; for my father had no ſooner made this remark, than he himſelf entered the room, and advancing to Amelia, who had ſtaid with us—'I 'have left,' ſaid he, 'this ſtupid rabble 'of baronets and ſquires to themſelves; 'a parcel of familiar puppies! who, be'cauſe I had ſome time ago the misfor'tune to blunder into their company, 'muſt pretend to rank me in the num'ber of their acquaintance, and, as 'ſuch, to pay me this viſit.'—'Pray, 'who are they? what are they?' cried my father, with a peeviſh haſtineſs that ſtrongly expreſſed his diſlike. 'They are, Sir,' ſaid he, 'gentlemen of diffe'rent diſpoſitions, united together only 'by a common taſte for a favourite di'verſion. Some of them are fond of 'the cockpit, others are fox-hunters, 'but all of them keep running horſes: 'and poſitively, by the ruſticity of their 'behaviour, one would imagine that 'they had their education in the ſtable; 'and indeed, for aught I know, the 'groom may be the better gentleman. 'But, as they have moſt of them very 'conſiderable eſtates, they imagine that 'they have a licence to trouble whom 'they pleaſe with their impertinence. 'The ladies, I expect, will have a ter'rible entertainment at dinner.'—'I 'am afraid ſo,' ſaid Amelia, 'and I 'heartily wiſh them gone.'—'If we 'could but ſhut our ears as eaſily as our 'eyes,' cried I, 'I ſhould eſteem it now 'an happineſs.'—'Gentlemen, ſquires, 'baronets!' ſaid my father, with a ſneer; 'fools, blockheads, ignorant, 'ſtupid raſcals! they know no higher ſa'tisfaction than a horſe-laugh.'—'Well, 'well,' returned Mellifont, very gravely, 'but you muſt not form an idea of our 'country gentlemen from theſe; many 'of whom would be aſhamed of being 'ſeen in their company, as I aſſure you 'I am. There are amongſt us men of 'ſenſe, agreeable companions, and here 'and there is ſcattered a man of hu'manity.'

This converſation was interrupted by our being informed that dinner was ready; on which we went to the dining-room, and, after making an apology for our abſence, took our ſeats at the table.

Horſes were the ſubject we found them upon when we entered the room, and this topick laſted all the time we were at dinner; nay, ſo ſtrictly did they adhere to it, that their very jeſts had a ſmack of the groom, mingled with an indecency the moſt ſhocking and diſtaſteful, and too coarſe and indelicate even to deſerve the name of a double entendre. Amelia and I were toaſted under the name of pretty fillies; which no ſooner went round, than one drank health to the riders; and this produced a loud laugh of applauſe, and, in the courſe of going round, picked up an additional piece of obſcenity from every one of theſe gentlemen, who, emulous of exceeding in this way, conſtantly produced a freſh laugh, and a ſtare in our faces.

faces. Amelia and I were in a ſituation worthy of pity; we bluſhed, hung down our heads, and (I ſpeak for myſelf) I was ready to ſink with ſhame. At laſt, ſomebody aſked Lucius if I was a good pacer. 'Aye, 'damme! and needs neither whip nor 'ſpur,' cried another. All eyes were again fixed on me; and thus the ſuppoſed wit was bandied about, collecting freſh mire from every kick. But whenever the man who had given us the affront in the hall began to ſpeak, for he ſeemed very deſirous of adding his quota, Mellifont ſtopped him ſhort, by ſnuffling out, 'I—I—I—,' and giving him a hint, that if he had not yet enough, he would lead him another turn. This kept him ſilent, and afforded us ſome ſmall relief.

At laſt ſomething was ſaid, which I had the happineſs not to underſtand; it was addreſſed to Mellifont, and was ſomething about jumping—no, leaping was the word: but it ſeems it was very groſs; for Lucius, who had ſeveral times before began to ſpeak, but was interrupted and borne down by ſome ſtupid ribaldry, ſeemed now reſolved to break through all oppoſition; and therefore, raiſing his voice louder than common—'Pray, gentlemen,' ſaid he, 'what 'have theſe ladies done, that they ſhould 'be ſhocked with ſuch poor, wretched 'obſcenity? Is there any merit in put-'ting a lady to the bluſh? It is cow-'ardly, mean, and ſcandalous; below 'the dignity of a gentleman. A gen-'tleman! did I ſay?—below the dig-'nity of a man!'—'Cowardly!' cried one of the moſt forward, interrupting him, with a haughty air, and frowning ſteady look, 'pray who do you call 'coward? Faith, I won't be led by the 'noſe.'—'Yes, cowardly!' cried Lucius, raiſing his voice ſtill higher, and ſpeaking with equal ſternneſs; 'aye, 'cowardly!'—'Cowardly!' echoed my father and Mellifont, at the ſame time. 'I repeat it again,' continued Lucius, with a firmneſs and reſolution that charmed me; 'it is cowardly, an inſult 'on decency; it is affronting the ladies 'in the tendereſt part; and, however au-'thorized by brutal cuſtom on theſe oc-'caſions, it is an inſult on nature—the 'moſt barbarous inſult, thus to diſco-'lour the cheek of conſcious innocence.' —'Pox!' cried a youth of about eighteen, who ſeemed, by his ignorance and his dialect, never to have been twenty miles from home, 'he weant let us be 'witty; I'll be curſt if ever I was ſo 'witty in aw my life. The women 'ſhould no' be ſheamfac'd; it is time 'that was o'er, or the devil's in't. I 'ha' ſaid more behauf before my own 'mother at wom, and ſhu loſt'd as thof 'ſhu would 'ha' be——' 'Witty!' cried my father, interrupting him, with a ſneer; 'let us ſee that you have com-'mon ſenſe, young man, before you af-'fect to be witty.'—'Common ſenſe!' ſaid Mellifont, with a ſatirical laugh; 'Common Senſe is a lady that very few 'here are acquainted with, I can tell 'you that: why, Common Senſe is no 'common woman; and therefore ſhe is 'as much ſhunned by theſe, as a com-'mon woman by a man who has any 'ſenſe at all. And as to my Lady De-'cency, they don't even know her when 'they ſee her; if they did, it might be 'poſſible to make them bluſh.' Mellifont had laid down his knife and fork at the beginning of this ſpeech; and now, leaning back in his chair, and holding up his hands in a ſupplicating poſture, he immediately added, with an arch look, that had a mixture of the ſerious and comical—

"Hail Decency! celeſtial maid!
"Deſcend from heav'n to beauty's aid,"
'And blaſt the wretch that's not afraid
'To affront thee.'

The humorous manner of his introducing the two firſt lines from Swift, and his adding the laſt, without the leaſt heſitation, gave us an agreeable ſurprize, and made my father and Lucius ſmile, for the firſt time ſince they had been at table. And indeed, their obſtinately refuſing to drink all the toaſts propoſed by theſe rakes, and their vindicating our refuſal, had kept them in a conſtant ſquabble, whilſt Mellifont was ſure to regulate himſelf according to their motions. Theſe gentlemen, intimidated, affronted, or ſtruck with ſome ſenſe of ſhame, continued pretty ſilent for ſome time; and then reſuming their favourite ſubject of race-horſes, to our no ſmall ſatisfaction, drank to each other, and let us alone.

At laſt this hateful meal was over, and I proteſt I would not go through the ſame mortifications for any conſiderations. My mind was then in a very

tender ſituation, eaſily ſhocked, and extremely ſuſceptible of pain. How barbarous, how cruel, how inhuman, then was it, thus to blaſt the joy of innocence! rudely to tear the veil that hides thoſe rites that modeſt decency would conceal, but which neither God, nor reaſon, condemn! with brutal inſolence to trample on the ſnowy robes of baſhful chaſtity! How impudent to ſtare us into confuſion, and to add a triumph to the affront by a ridiculous laugh! I am ſhocked at the recollection of this ſcene; and therefore muſt conclude with aſſuring you, that I am your ladyſhip's moſt ſincere and affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXVIII.

AFTER ſo long a ſilence, Madam, you may juſtly wonder that I have the aſſurance to confeſs that I am ſtill alive; but however aſhamed I am of my negligence, I have neither the complaiſance nor the reſolution to leave the world out of a punctilio of good-breeding, eſpecially as I am in perfect health, and ſo happy in my preſent ſituation, that I can, without the leaſt pain, think of deferring, for many years, a viſit to the heavenly regions. You tell me I have loſt, in the wife, the affection I owe to the friend; and I will not deny your having, in appearance, ſome reaſon for this heavy charge; but as I hate apologies, I will not take the trouble to juſtify myſelf, though I would have you think my negligence owing to the different turn of my affairs, to my indolence, ſtupidity, or whatever elſe you pleaſe, rather than to a want of that affection which I ſhall ever feel for you.

Three months ago, I gave you an account of our marriage; and I have now to add, that, in order to put an end to thoſe ceremonious viſits, which at laſt began to grow extremely fatiguing, we found ourſelves under a neceſſity of leaving my aunt's ſooner than we had intended: Mr. Manly, therefore, bought an eſtate at ſome miles diſtance, with a manſion-houſe, which, by his direction, was repaired and furniſhed with all poſſible diligence. We removed hither about two months after I ſent you my laſt, and, at the ſame time, Mellifont carried his bride to his own eſtate. We frequently ſee each other, and enjoy all that ſatisfaction from theſe viſits which the moſt intimate friendſhip can afford us. Not the leaſt reſerve ſubſiſts between us; a perfect ſympathy in each other's happineſs makes us ſuch ſtrangers to ceremony, that we have nothing to do but to conſult our own inclinations, to render us agreeable to each other. Our houſe is a very neat building, yet ſo plain a one, that it would be trifling too much with your patience to give a deſcription of it. The ſituation is indeed charming, being ſurrounded with woods and groves, which on the one ſide muſt, in the ſummer ſeaſon, appear extremely delightful, as the other does ſo now, though in the midſt of froſt and ſnow. *There* will be the triumph of nature; *here* is the boaſt of art; *there* that uncultivated wildneſs, which pleaſes without method, and without deſign, charming moſt where the eaſy confuſion, and agreeable diſorder, render art ſuperfluous, and labour vain; *here* all the ornaments that art, in deſpight of nature, can beſtow.

In the front is a tall and ſtately wood, compoſed of oaks venerable with age, with no other opening but a large area, and a viſta, which carries the eye from the centre of the building to a conſiderable diſtance. Here the intermingled branches muſt, I fancy, in the ſummer ſeaſon, caſt a ſhade, varied with all the degrees of light, from the bright ſunbeam, glittering through the boughs, to the duſky gloom of ſober twilight.

Behind the main building is a garden of conſiderable extent; which, even in this ſeaſon of the year, has it's beauties. To take no notice of the parterre, which lies next the houſe, the hedges, which are on each ſide the principal walks, are formed of ever-greens, reſembling walls, adorned, at proper diſtances, with pilaſters, which, with eternal verdure, branch into all the decorations of architecture. In the midſt of each walk, along an opening, on either hand, the eye is carried through a number of triumphal arches, compoſed of the ſame leafy materials, and which, leading to the extremity of the garden, are bounded by ſeveral fine alcoves, the paintings of which, though injured by time, have a very agreeable effect. In ſome of the ſquares compoſed by theſe walks, are fiſh-ponds, in others groves of fruit-trees, and in others knots of flowers

of

of various forms, which, in the ſeaſon for theſe fragrant ornaments, muſt, I fancy, be vaſtly delightful. In the middle of the garden, where all the principal avenues meet, upon a pretty high aſcent, is a ſummer-houſe, the windows of which, as well as the walls, are ſo covered with ever-greens, that the faint obſtructed light ſpreads a gloom perfectly ſoothing; while the cluſters of ſhining berries half covered with ſnow, hanging againſt the glaſs, with froſted leaves of intermingled ſilver and green, ſeem to give the lye to the ſeaſon, and to join in one view Chriſtmas and Autumn. At the entrance is a guard of giants, with their maſſy clubs reſting on the ground; harmleſs monſters! that I can view without the leaſt trembling. 'Tis true, they themſelves appear in ſome diſorder, for want of pruning; their heads and bodies are covered with a number of luxuriant branches, and even their fingers are grown near half a yard beyond the juſt proportion that ought to be allowed them.

Autumn was far ſpent before Lucius and I, attended by my father, went to take a view of our new habitation. I fancied myſelf in fairy-land; and could not help expreſſing my ſurprize, that while the winds, on one ſide the houſe, ſcattered in wavy curls the ruſſet leaves, which, with every blaſt, fell from the half-naked groves; on the other, they were cloathed with lively verdure, and ſtill appeared ſmiling in their gayeſt liveries.

'Tis true, there is ſomething diſagreeably formal in the ſtudied regularity that reigns here: ſtatues, obeliſks, and triumphal arches, are but aukwardly mimicked in box and yew; but ſtill they find work for ſome labouring hands, who might otherwiſe want the means of ſubſiſtence; and, for this reaſon, Lucius may poſſibly continue them in their preſent ſituation, with only a few alterations, in order to render the whole more eaſy, free, and natural. Beſides, as the houſe and gardens are in the midſt of a wood, this ſpot, even in the ſummer ſeaſon, will agreeably ſet off the wildneſs of the proſpect, and, by a pleaſing contraſt, heighten the variegated ſcene.

In this peaceful retirement, Madam, we enjoy a tranquillity unknown to courts. Our paſſions, which, before this union, were high-raiſed, and too tenderly ardent to be unmixed with pain, now gently ſoothed, ſink into a delightful repoſe. The diffidence, the flutter of heart, is gone, and exchanged for the calmer ſweets of an endearing friendſhip. We have now the ſatisfaction of paſſing our time in the proper employment of reaſonable and immortal beings. No wayward humours interrupt our peace; no little jars fret the tender cord of ſweet content and mutual complacency, which, when once broken, is ſo difficult to join again.

Religion, which, to others, is a ſource of the moſt gloomy reflections, is to us an inexhauſtible ſpring of rational and ſublime delight. We daily addreſs the ſupreme and ſovereign Good, as our father, our friend, and benefactor; we admire the wiſdom, the wonderous ſkill that ſhines in all his works: we adore his goodneſs, and pour forth our gratitude in humble praiſe. What tranſport can equal that of gratitude! what delight be comparable to that of a thankful heart! If you call this enthuſiaſm, it is, at leaſt, an enthuſiaſm the moſt noble and refined, juſtified by the cooleſt dictates of reaſon, and neceſſary to render human happineſs compleat.

Our minds have hitherto been calm and unruffled. My ſiſter Marilla is my conſtant companion: I have prevailed with her to ſtay with us a fortnight; and we ſpend a part of the day together, either in reading in the ſummer-houſe, which Lucius has furniſhed with the moſt valuable ornament, a fine collection of books; or in paying or receiving viſits, among a few ſelect friends. Hither we ſometimes all three repair; and, with intermingled chat and reading, find ſubjects ever new and entertaining. Great part of my time is taken up with the management of my family, or in working at my needle. Your ladyſhip ſees what a domeſtick animal I am grown: but while theſe amuſements give an alacrity to my ſpirits, by diverſifying my ſatisfactions, I ſhall have the greateſt reaſon to be pleaſed with them; for though you ſmile at the meanneſs of my taſte, I find a real happineſs ariſing, even from theſe low employments, ſince they not only preſerve peace and order in the family, but give a greater reliſh to the ſuperior pleaſures of which I am ſenſible, when, unbending my mind, I enjoy the converſation of my friends. As to the vapours, Madam, it is ſo

long ſince I have felt thoſe modiſh diſorders, that I ſcarcely know what they mean; ſo that not the roſy milk-maid, happy in her humble obſcurity, that ſings or laughs from morn till evening, can be leſs troubled with the ſpleen than I.

I have nothing more to add, but that I am yours, &c.

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXIX.

DEAR MADAM,

THOUGH it is impoſſible I ſhould receive an anſwer to my laſt, you having yet ſcarcely read it, I write now to let you ſee that I can commit, upon occaſion, an act of ſupererogation. Add this to my former neglect, and try if it won't, in ſome meaſure, make the balance even.

Two or three days after our arrival here, my father returned to London. We were now pretty well ſettled; for thoſe workmen who had been employed in making the neceſſary repairs, being diſcharged, every thing was ſoon reduced into proper order. Mellifont, Amelia, and my ſiſter Marilla, were preſent, when my father, in the moſt tender manner, took his leave. We had all reſolved to accompany him ſome miles on the road, but he poſitively refuſed to ſuffer it, alledging that this would only prolong the uneaſineſs of parting: we were, therefore, obliged to ſubmit; and being mounted on horſeback, (for he had before made us a preſent of his coach) attended by a ſervant, was ſoon out of ſight. We returned into the hall, and ſtood for ſome time, in a thoughtful poſture, without ſpeaking a word; when at laſt Mellifont, aſſuming an air of chearfulneſs, cried out—'Come, come, 'what do we ſtand here for? We muſt 'divert this penſive humour; ſuppoſe 'we take a turn in the garden?' This motion was immediately complied with, and the uneaſy gloom inſenſibly diſperſed; but the weather being pretty ſharp, I ordered a fire to be made in the ſummer-houſe, to which we retired. Having taken our places, Marilla ſaid with a ſmile—'I was one day laſt week 'to viſit Miſs Powers, an elderly maiden 'lady of great prudence, and the daughter of a deceaſed clergyman; who, 'though ſhe has but a ſmall fortune, finds 'the means, by the help of the greateſt 'oeconomy, to make a pretty genteel 'appearance. When I knocked at the 'door, I was told ſhe was not at home; 'but as ſhe was expected every moment, 'I was deſired to walk in; and, indeed, 'I had hardly ſat down when ſhe entered the room, with her hands covered 'with dirt, and one of them ſtained 'with blood. I aroſe, and, with a 'good deal of concern, enquired what 'was the matter.—"O, nothing," 'cried ſhe: "I have fallen down, but "I have only hurt my hand; it was a "mercy I did not daub my new gown." 'It was impoſſible for me to forbear 'ſmiling at this anſwer; I deſired ſhe 'would explain herſelf, and aſked her 'if ſhe thought the Almighty could be 'ſuppoſed to concern himſelf in an affair of ſuch trifling moment as a few 'yards of ſilk, which, though it had 'been ſoiled, would ſtill anſwer all the 'ends of dreſs, though not of vanity. 'She was very much diſpleaſed at this 'anſwer; and, therefore, all the while 'ſhe was cleaning herſelf, and preparing 'a plaiſter for her hand, warmly juſtified the propriety of the expreſſion; 'alledging that nothing was too mean 'to fall under the inſpection of the 'ſupreme Governor of the world. I 'thought this argument ſo concluſive, 'that I was quite at a loſs for a reply; 'and, therefore, introduced a different 'ſubject. But I have ſince recollected 'an obſervation of yours, brother, that, 'among ſuperficial thinkers, it is no 'uncommon thing to find an injudicious application of the moſt important 'truths, when it is made to ſupport 'their own weak prejudices, to caſes 'in themſelves of no importance.'

This ſhort ſtory gave riſe to a very long converſation. Lucius began with obſerving, that particular circumſtances will make ſome perſons look upon an inconſiderable pain as a trifle, when compared to the loſs of what can only ſerve to flatter the imagination, and the more ſo, in proportion to the difficulty of procuring theſe gratifications. 'This,' ſaid he, 'is a common caſe; but if it 'be proper to call the preſerving a gown 'unſullied a mercy, or a favour from 'Heaven, it muſt be equally ſo to make 'this a petition in prayer: yet, if a 'lady was to be overheard at her devotions, crying—"Lord preſerve my "beſt gown and petticoat from ſtains

"and

'and dirt!" the abſurdity would be 'ſo glaring, that nobody could avoid 'taking notice of it. One who has a 'competency, prays for wealth; another, 'that he may obtain the honour for 'which he is ſoliciting: but what is 'this, abſtracted from the moral uſe of 'wealth and honour, which few ſeem 'to regard, more than praying for a 'new head-dreſs or a new gown? Or 'what are the petitions for the continu-'ance of theſe, when none but them-'ſelves receive the leaſt benefit from 'them, but praying that the gown, or 'petticoat, may remain unſullied? A 'gentleman who has a coach and pair, 'is ambitious of being drawn by ſix 'horſes; and, only with this view, ſol-'licits for a place, to enable him to 'accompliſh it: now, where is the dif-'ference between praying that he may 'obtain this place, and praying that, 'inſtead of a coach and two, he may 'ride in a coach and ſix? If a pretty 'milkmaid ſhould pray for money to 'buy a new top-knot, would her peti-'tion be more ridiculous?

'Men are carried away by falſe ap-'pearances, and enamoured with the 'dazzling ſhew of ſome glittering trifle. 'Providence, they flatter themſelves, 'is employed on their behalf, and the 'God of nature engaged in procuring 'the empty, the pernicious bauble. 'The miſer unjuſtly ſeizes the laſt re-'mains of an unfortunate, helpleſs fa-'mily, expoſes them to want and beg-'gary, and adds the fruits of extortion 'to his uſeleſs ſtore, and cries, with his 'hollow eyes lifted up to heaven, It 'is a mercy that he was not too late 'to ſave his money! Might not the 'leſs guilty debauchee go to the ſtews, 'and, with equal propriety, ſay, It 'is a mercy that he found his favourite 'girl at home! Yet what horrid 'profanation! Can any thing be more 'ſuperſtitious, more ſhocking and ab-'ſurd? Unconſcious of the final reſult 'of things, while Heaven is affronted, 'they are delighted with the gratifica-'tion of their favourite vices: but how 'vain, how deluſive, the joy! They 'miſtook for happineſs, what was really 'the cauſe of the ſharpeſt anguiſh. The 'miſer, as he carries home his gold, is 'robbed of all his dear recovered trea-'ſure; while the debauchee is expiring 'with a loathſome diſeaſe.'

'But do you infer from this, brother,' ſaid Marilla, 'that the Deity is entirely 'unconcerned about the temporal hap-'pineſs or miſery of individuals? For 'my part, I think this would be going 'a little too far.'

Lucius pauſed a moment, and then ſaid, he had hitherto only endeavoured to expoſe a falſe notion of Providence, and that kind of ſuperſtition, which makes ſome men, who deem them-ſelves the peculiar favourites of Heaven, reſolve events the moſt trivial, in com-pariſon with the important concerns of human life, into ſignal bleſſings and deliverances. A man of this turn knows that gratitude is a duty, and affects to diſcharge it very minutely; but never reflecting that the ſuper-intending care of Providence is exer-ciſed over a whole univerſe, and, with regard to him, only as a part of that whole; his gratitude, which ſhould be always warm and lively, lies dor-mant, till ſome circumſtance of his own life, no matter how trifling in itſelf, provided it powerfully ſtrikes his paſſions, calls it forth to exerciſe: he can then prove to you how much above his neighbours he is the object of the Divine favour, and how juſtly his pious acknowledgments render him ſo.

They then entered more largely into the conſideration of a particular Provi-dence; and, as I have recited their obſervations hitherto, I think I may as well endeavour to give you the ſubſtance of the reſt. But, dear Madam, you muſt excuſe me if I fail in the performance: it is a taſk ſomewhat above my abilities; and, as I ſhall be forced to abridge a very long diſpute, which met with vari-ous interruptions, I am ſenſible it will want all thoſe natural graces in the repe-tition which gave life and ſpirit to the converſation.

Mellifont obſerved, as the world is a great machine, governed by fixed mechanical laws, it is moſt reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that man, as a free agent, is entirely left to the free exerciſe of his natural abilities, and to all the conſe-quences reſulting from it; for it is ab-ſurd to imagine, that a Being of infinite ſagacity ſhould form a world in ſo bungling a manner, as to make any interpoſition at all neceſſary afterwards; much more to ſuppoſe it ſo imperfect, as to ſtand in need of continual botch-ing and mending. 'A man makes a

'watch,

'watch, by which I would illuſtrate my 'idea of this grand piece of mechaniſm; 'but this watch, though it may be per-'fect in it's kind, yet, as it wants fre-'quent winding up, and eſpecially as it 'calls for repeated repairs, is a piece of 'workmanſhip unworthy the ſkill of an 'almighty Artificer.'

'Excuſe me, Mellifont,' replied Lucius; 'you are going on with a ſuppo-'ſition that will never be granted. I 'readily allow, that the ſtupendous 'fabrick of this earth, and all the un-'numbered worlds that fill the vaſt im-'menſity of ſpace, move, in their ſeveral 'orbits, by the moſt perfect laws; but, 'does it follow from hence, that the 'whole is only a grand piece of clock-'work, which, being ſet a going, will 'move ſeveral thouſand years before it 'be run down? Gravitation, by which 'all bodies have a tendency to each 'other, according to the ſtricteſt en-'quiry, is one of thoſe qualities which 'do not eſſentially reſide in matter, con-'ſequently, it can be no part of the 'machine. Your watch, then, has not 'only loſt it's ſpring, but the pivots are 'dropped from every wheel, and the 'whole become a heap of confuſion; 'nay, the very wheels themſelves have 'loſt their form, and the metal of which 'they are compoſed is crumbled into 'infinite minute particles.

'This gravitation, which evades the 'ſearch of the moſt curious enquiries, 'can be reſolved into nothing but the 'immediate hand of Omnipotence, which 'locks together the infinitely ſmall par-'ticles of ſolids, impels and gives mo-'tion to the heavenly bodies, adds freſh 'fuel to the ſun, and whirls round it 'this ponderous maſs of earth and ſea, 'in a conſtant rotation of days and ſea-'ſons. Hence ariſes a general Provi-'dence, which, preſiding over all na-'ture, gives fertility to the ſoil, raiſes 'the ſap in vegetables, bloſſoms in the 'trees, and glows in every flower.

'It is very apparent, that thunder 'and lightning, ſunſhine and rain, and, 'in ſome meaſure, the various degrees 'of heat and cold, are not under the 'ſame regulations as the diurnal 'and annual changes; ſince ſome of 'them are ſo far from being periodical, 'that they have no relation to time and 'place, but are, with reſpect to us, ab-'ſolutely uncertain and precarious; yet, 'on ſome of theſe depend the ſub-'ſiſtence, the ſupport, and very being, 'of the whole animal and vegetable 'world.

'Here is another inſtance, and in this 'there is room for the exertion both 'of a general and particular Providence; 'an inſtance, which you, Sir, would 'have found ſome difficulty in reducing 'to a ſcheme wholly mechanical. The 'earth is parched up with drought, the 'air is more and more rarified, and, 'conſequently, by it's tenuity, more 'unfit to raiſe to a due height, and ſup-'port thoſe miſts from the ſea and 'rivers, which are neceſſary to form 'the refreſhing rain. Who is it that 'directs the clouds to thicken in the 'heavens, to fall in cool, refreſhing 'ſhowers, and, before it be too late, at 'once to rejoice the earth and bleſs 'mankind? If this dry ſeaſon laſted 'one month, why might it not have 'laſted two, ſix, or twelve, till man 'and beaſt had been quite deſtroyed, 'and whole regions laid in ruins? 'Again, the rain falls, the moiſt and 'ſpungy air ſtill collects, and ſtill pours 'in a ſettled ſtream; and there is greater 'reaſon to believe that it will rain to-'morrow than there was yeſterday that 'it will rain to-day; and while it con-'tinues the probability is ſtill on the ſide 'of it's longer continuance. Did not the 'Parent of mankind interpoſe, the all-'enlivening ſun might for ever hide his 'cheering beams, and we might be 'curſed with a cloudy ſky, while joy 'would be for ever baniſhed, and ſeed-'time and harveſt be no more.

'In theſe inſtances, we daily ſee the 'moſt convincing proofs of the friendly 'care of the univerſal Parent. Hence, 'he bleſſes one nation, and depreſſes 'another; and, even in the ſame coun-'try, humbles and exalts whomſoever 'he pleaſes.

'But, to be more particular; is there 'the leaſt ſhadow of a probability, if we 'may judge from analogy, that this 'ſtupendous Being, who with ſuch in-'finite care and ſkill preſerves the ma-'terial, the vegetable, the animal world, 'ſhould be entirely regardleſs of the 'intellectual and moral? That the 'Being, who knows the moſt ſecret 'ſprings that move the human heart, 'ſhould not, upon occaſion, influence 'theſe, and, by affecting an individual, 'give happineſs to millions? That he 'ſhould inſpire with wiſdom, or perplex

'and

'and confound, ſo as beſt to anſwer the 'wiſe deſigns of his government? That 'the God of truth ſhould, by diffuſing 'a little light over a dark, benighted 'mind, promote the cauſe of truth, and 'ſpread the influence of pure religion, a 'free enquiry, and liberty of conſci-'ence, through a whole nation? That 'the moſt benevolent Being in the uni-'verſe ſhould grant the petitions of the 'man whoſe heart is prepared by hum-'ble prayer to receive the bleſſings he 'aſks? That the Friend of mankind, 'the moſt virtuous, the moſt amiable 'Being, ſhould look with complacency 'on virtue in diſtreſs, and relieve the 'pious ſupplicant who confides in his 'goodneſs? That he ſhould curb the 'pride of the ſucceſsful villain, and 'ſhield the honeſt heart from the ſly 'attacks of the fraudulent knave? Is 'there any thing irrational in this? any 'thing beneath a God? If it be more 'noble to change the ſwelling anguiſh 'of diſtreſs into the gladſome raptures 'of gratitude and joy, than to form the 'moſt curious machine, this muſt be an 'employment more worthy of a God 'than to create a world of lifeleſs matter, 'or all the glories of what Milton calls 'the "golden pavement of heaven, or "the bright ſea of jaſper, or of liquid "pearl."

Mellifont looked very grave, and for ſome time continued ſilent, as if loſt in thought; when ſeeming to recollect himſelf—'Well, well,' replied he, 'you 'may, for aught I know, be in the 'right. We giddy-headed fellows don't 'think ſo deeply. But, after all, yours 'is an opinion that, now I think of it, 'we may reaſonably wiſh to be true. 'However, let us change the ſubject.'

Thus, Madam, with indefatigable labour, have I blundered through this long converſation, and am now ſo heartily tired, that I am abſolutely unable to add any thing more, than that I am moſt affectionately yours,

FELICIA MANLY.

P. S. When I had finiſhed the above letter, inſtead of ſending it away immediately, as I at firſt intended, I reſolved to ſhew it Lucius, and this delay retarded my ſending it till the end of the week. I have juſt now received an anſwer to my laſt; but with what ſurprize do I find myſelf ſo unmercifully treated about one poor paragraph*, which, though you had diſliked, your good-nature might have made you overlook! I am really half angry; but you throw away ſo much wit and humour on my pious rant, as you are pleaſed to call it, that I am almoſt afraid and aſhamed to confeſs it: however, I can't help being perſuaded, that all this mirth is at the expence of your more ſober judgment. But the bottom of my paper puts me in mind that it is time to conclude this long poſtſcript; I therefore refer you to my next for an anſwer, and, for the preſent, throw down my pen.

LETTER XXX.

DEAR MADAM,

I SHALL take no notice of the ridiculous light in which you place my manner of life. Your repreſenting me as a recluſe, and the companion of the young Druid Lucius, and your invocation to the rural gods and goddeſſes, on their receiving me to theſe ſequeſtered, ever-verdant ſhades, have ſuch a mixture of pleaſantry and humour, that with all that ſolemn ſanctity which you lay to my charge, I could not help laughing very heartily: but the caſe is a little different with regard to what you call the puritanical ſcheme, and the pious whim; for your ridicule here has a levity, in my opinion, bordering a little upon the prophane. Yet, for all this, it ſeems you muſt know what method Lucius took to make me comply with it, and inſiſt upon my ſending you the particulars. Can any thing be more extraordinary? However, to let you ſee how much I am yours, I obey, and proceed.

A few days after our marriage, Lucius deſired me to take a turn with him in the garden. I readily complied; and as I perceived an unuſual thoughtfulneſs in his look, I endeavoured to divert him; when, taking hold of my hand—'My 'dear Felicia,' ſaid he, 'I am going 'to make myſelf appear to you in a 'very ridiculous light, and to make a 'propoſal that I fear will expoſe me to

* Letter XXVIII. page 99. We daily addreſs the Supreme, &c. from which paſſage Charlotte takes occaſion to ridicule prayer.

'be

'be laughed at: but perhaps I injure 'you; I am perſuaded I do. Cuſtom 'makes us aſhamed of our duty: we are 'aſhamed of uttering ſolemn, important 'truths, though of the greateſt moment; 'for however freely we talk of the ſo-'cial duties, it is with reluctance we 'mention thoſe to our Maker.'

'How you raiſe my curioſity!' cried I. 'Out with it, dear Sir, I beſeech you, 'and don't keep me any longer in ſu-'ſpence.'

'You know, my dear,' continued he, with a tender warmth, 'the bleſſings I 'am loaded with. I imagine myſelf 'raiſed from almoſt nothing; I ſee my 'father relieved from thoſe diſtreſſes 'which weighed me down; and, while 'ſurrounded with plenty, I enjoy one 'bleſſing more, dearer than all the af-'fluence of life. Ah, what is life com-'pared to this! Can I, O can I, ſmo-'ther the gratitude of my heart? Can I 'confine it within the narrow limits of 'my own breaſt? Will not you join 'with me in adoring the kind Sovereign 'of the world? Shall we not, with 'united hearts, at once expreſs the full 'ſentiments of our ſouls, and keep 'alive the pious ardour that longs for 'utterance? Shall we not, by peti-'tioning the continuance of his mercy, 'implant and cheriſh thoſe diſpoſitions 'that will make us more worthy of that 'mercy?'

'As I am equally intereſted in the 'bleſſings you mention,' ſaid I, 'I 'ought, perhaps, to reproach myſelf with 'a want of that ſenſibility, which you 'expreſs with a warmth that, I muſt 'own, is very affecting. I have heard 'prayer ridiculed; and you muſt ex-'cuſe me if I ſay, I am afraid I ſhould 'look upon it as a few minutes paſſed 'in a very irkſome manner. There is 'ſomething ſo ſolemn and gloomy in 'the very idea of theſe ſet devotions, 'that they almoſt frighten me.'

'Let us baniſh,' ſaid he, with a ſmile, 'the gloom of ſuperſtition, and Religion 'will then appear all over amiable; her 'beauties will brighten upon the re-'view, and the more we are acquainted 'with her, the more we ſhall be charmed 'with her graces. Prayer is one of the 'firſt duties dictated by natural Reli-'gion, the elder ſiſter of Chriſtianity; 'a duty naturally ariſing from our obli-'gations to, and dependence on, the 'univerſal Parent, the Friend of man-'kind, the Patron of virtue, the moſt 'amiable, the moſt kind and benevo-'lent Being in the univerſe: a duty en-'joined by Chriſtianity, and enforced 'by the example of our great Law-'giver himſelf. Did we, my dear, ad-'dreſs a ſtern and rigorous tyrant, a 'gloomy terror and awful dread might 'juſtly hang upon our ſpirits; but how 'great is the difference, when inſpired 'by gratitude, and prompted by the 'glow of filial love, we addreſs a Be-'ing whoſe all-commanding goodneſs 'demands our utmoſt eſteem, our higheſt 'complacency! Surely it muſt then 'be accompanied with a moſt ſublime 'and rational delight!

'I know it is objected that, as we 'can inform the Deity of nothing but 'what he knew before, and can aſk him 'for nothing but what his original 'goodneſs will prompt him to grant 'without our petitioning for it, prayer 'muſt be, in it's own nature, abſurd 'and impertinent.

'It is true, that this duty makes no 'change in God; it is true he will grant, 'without our petitions, what it is fit for 'infinite Beneficence to give, and us to 'receive; but it is as true, that the 'exerciſe of this duty, by changing the 'diſpoſitions of the mind, changes that 'fitneſs; as the humble ſupplicant is an 'object more worthy of the Divine bleſ-'ſing and protection, than the man 'whom no ſenſe of duty can fix, and 'no obligations bind. Does it not 'exalt, refine, and elevate the mind, by 'leading it to the contemplation of the 'moſt ſublime and important truths? 'Does it not call away the heart from 'the purſuit of folly and madneſs? 'Does it not raiſe the ſoul to the God 'of virtue, and, conſequently, to vir-'tue itſelf? Does it not check the growth 'of pride, ſelf-ſufficiency, and malice? 'Does it not keep awake the tender ſen-'timents of humanity, our gratitude 'to our Maker, our affection to our 'friends?'

'Enough, my dear Lucius,' here I cried; 'enough. I own myſelf con-'quered; my reluctance is vaniſhed.'

You muſt know, Madam, it was at the cloſe of the day when Lucius deſired me to walk out; and, as the ſun was then ſetting, it began to grow dark: we therefore went into the thickeſt part of a tuft of trees, where we might ſafely remain unobſerved; when, like the firſt

happy

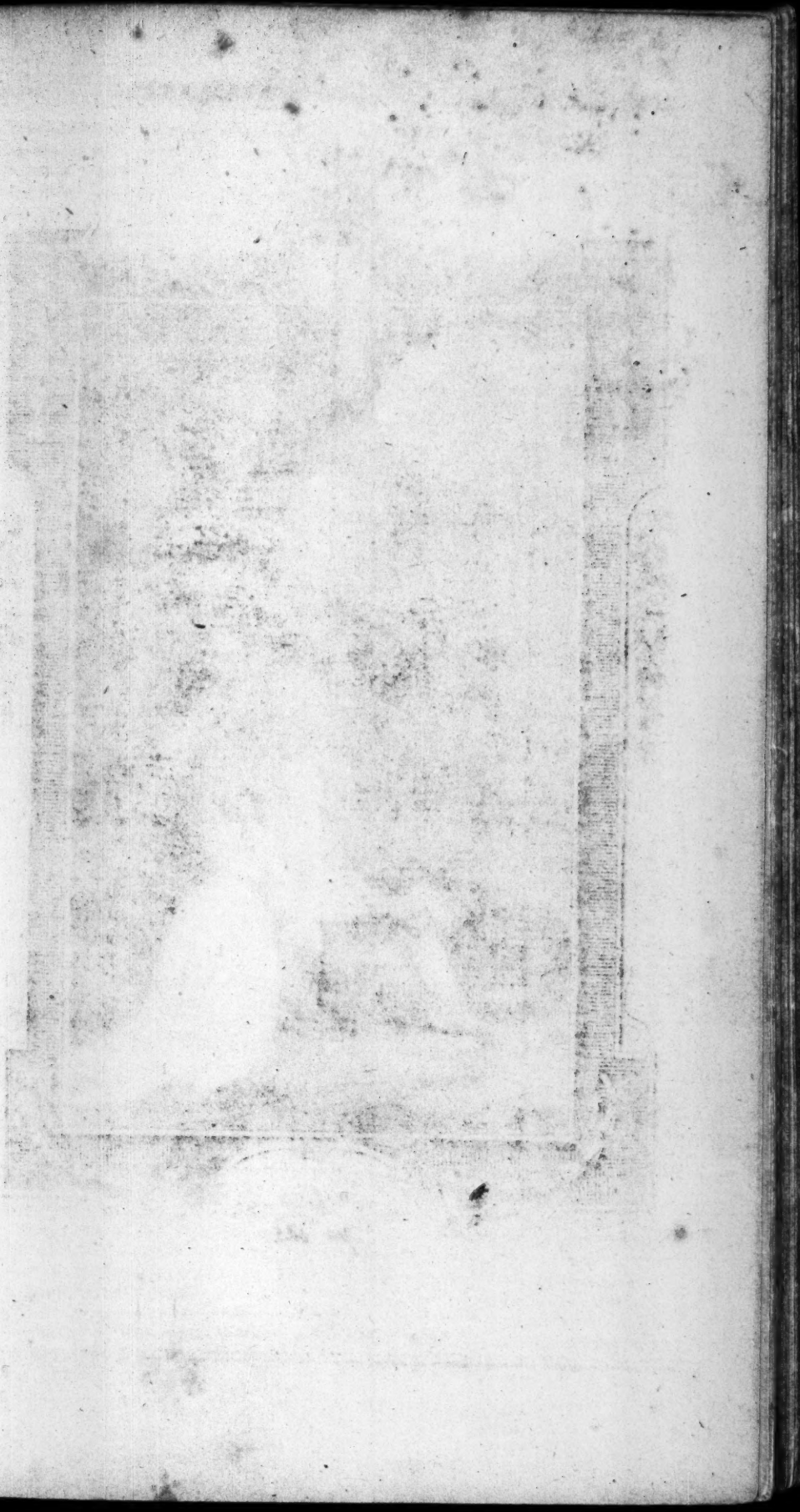

Plate III.

Publishd as the Act directs. by Harrison & Co. March 1. 1788.

happy pair, we preſented our evening oriſons, which, for the future, were commonly performed in my chamber. When we came to remove, it was reſolved that this duty ſhould be performed twice a day in the family; and, on this account, we choſe the moſt ſober young people we could find for our ſervants. I dare ſay, we have more order and decency obſerved in our family, than in any other within ten miles round us. We ſeldom omit going to church twice every Sunday; not ſo much to gain any new acquiſition of knowledge, as to keep alive a ſenſe of our duty, and, at the ſame time, to ſet an example to the reſt of the pariſh; the lower part of which are greatly influenced by what they ſee us great folks, as they call us, do: for here, with reſpect to example, one or two thouſand pounds a year has a thouſand times more efficacy than all the advantages of ſuperior ſenſe and reaſon.

You have now two letters ſince I received your laſt; and if they do not give your ladyſhip the vapours, I may be in hopes that you will, in time, be good for ſomething elſe, beſides giving felicity to one man, pleaſure to a few friends, and happineſs to a number of dependants: you may in that caſe, I ſay, become ridiculous enough to exerciſe the wit, and exhauſt the ſpirits, of your gay companions; but you will never have the honour, like me, to find a friend who will, with ſuch ſparkling wit and fine addreſs, endeavour to laugh you out of your religion. I have the honour to be your ladyſhip's very humble ſervant,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXI.

IN order to introduce this letter, Madam, it is neceſſary for me to inform you, that my father, before he took his leave of us, had ſeveral times hinted to Lucius, that it would be no diſadvantageous employment for him to learn the characters and manners of his tenants, and even of the poor, reſiding on his eſtate; that he ought particularly to enquire into their circumſtances; and that, as his intereſt was cloſely connected with theirs, to endeavour to ſerve them to the utmoſt of his power. As ſoon as my father was gone, Lucius reſolved to pay them a viſit, and yeſterday began to put his deſign in execution, imagining that, as he was yet quite unknown, he might be the better able to inform himſelf to his ſatisfaction. Laſt night, after his return, I learned his ſucceſs; and as he happened upon ſome adventures in this expedition worth relating, I ſhall give them to you while they are yet freſh in my memory.

He ſet out ſoon after it was light, dreſſed but meanly, and with only one ſervant out of livery, and rode to a farm-houſe, at about two miles diſtance; where, entering the yard, he diſmounted, knocked at the door, and aſked for the maſter, who came running from the ſtable, and, in a ſurly manner, demanded what he wanted. Lucius deſired to be informed if he knew any body that could ſupply him with a load of hay. This queſtion at once civilized the farmer, who before ſeemed reſolved to behave in a very brutal manner; but the bargain being ſoon made, Lucius went in to pay, and the farmer to receive his money; when a mug of ale being brought, the latter, after a good hearty draught, became in an inſtant one of the moſt ſociable fellows in the univerſe; he ſhook Lucius twenty times by the hand, with a freedom as great as if it had been authorized by a long acquaintance. Having entertained him, for half an hour together, with the price of corn and cattle at the market, Lucius, with the air of a ſtranger, enquired about his farm, and aſked him who was his landlord; when he began in the following manner—

'Yo mun know, meſter, that I ha' 'got a new lonlord; I doant know who 'he is, but they ſay he has married one of 'your Lonon ladies, who, they ſay, 'has a mort o' money: beſides, they 'ſay, he is one o' thoſe good-natured 'foo's, look'e, that wull do ony mon a 'ſervice that axes him, thof he never 'ſead him aw his born days; and beſides, I believe the grey mare is the 'better horſe; for he is meety fond of 'his lady, never ſtirs from whome, and 'never gets drunk. Now my dame 'ſays, that ſuch a lonlord as this'n is fit 'to be impoſed upon; but I doant mind 'what ſha ſays, for I am meſter in my 'own houſe, and weant be contradicted 'by the beſt woman that wears a heead. 'No, no; let Tummus Clod aloan for 'that: before I'd be like my lonlord, 'I'd hong myſelf.'

'You are in the right, my friend,' replied Lucius, laughing; 'always take 'care to be maſter in your own houſe.' —'Ey, ey,' rejoined the courageous farmer; 'I am a wiſe mon, I can tell ye 'that; and a ſcollard too, for I can 'reead and write; and I was one whoale 'month in my accidancy, and larn'd 'ſomething about parts of ſpeeach, and 'neauns and prunams, and I hardly 'know what myſelf.'—'I believe it,' cried Lucius. 'You are a great man; 'and may be as great a man as your 'landlord yet, for aught I know.'

'Odzookers, gi' me your hond again!' cried the farmer, delighted with the compliment; 'yo'r an honeſt felley, I'll 'be ſworn: but here's to ye heartily. 'But, as I was ſaying, my lonlord is a 'ſoft ſort of a mon; and ſo, as I owe 'hauf a year's rent to my old lonlord, I 'have a mind my new lonlord ſhould 'pey it; but you munno ſay one thing 'of it.'—'O no,' replied Lucius, 'I 'won't ſay any thing of it, without you 'tell your new landlord of it yourſelf.'— 'No, no; who would be foo' then?' rejoined the farmer. 'I only ſell a few 'trees, that were ſtonding on the lond 'time out o' mind; and which I ſhould 'no' do by reet, a cauſe they were men-'tioned in my leaſe.'—'Well, but as 'to the honeſty of the thing, friend 'Thomas,' cried Lucius, 'how do you 'reconcile that?'—'Honeſty!' replied Clod; 'why, as to that, meſter, you 'know we mun live. It is true, I am 'pretty well to paſs; but a mon ſhould 'take care o' his family; and ye know, 'what the eye does no' ſee, the heart 'does no' rue, as the proverb goes; and 'a little out of a mickle is no' miſs'd.' —'But pray,' ſaid Lucius, 'how much 'may the trees you have cut down be 'worth?'—'Why look'e, my lad,' replied the farmer, 'a hundred pound; 'and ſo I ſhall ha' ten paund in my 'pocket, for my trouble; that yo know 'is but fair.'—'For your trouble!' cried Lucius; 'that is very extraor-'dinary.'—'Why yo know,' rejoined the booby, 'a mon ſhould be paid for 'his labour; and beſides, ſuch a hen-'peck'd——'

Here his wife entered, who, it ſeems, had overheard ſome part of this fine diſcourſe; and giving him a look of contempt—'You are a wiſe felley,' cried ſhe, 'to tell aw ye'r affairs to a ſtrean-'ger! Ah! ye aud foo', if I had no 'more wit than yo, ye might have been 'hanged before now.'—'Nay, daam,' cried he, 'doent ſcold; ye know that ye 'advis'd me to it. I had no' fel'd the 'trees, if ve had no' made me.'— 'I made ye!' cried ſhe, colouring, and coming a ſtep or two nearer; 'I made 'ye! I made ye tell of it too, did I? 'Anſwer me that; do, dunce, do. This 'mon, for ouwt yo know, may tell 'Squire Monly.'—'No, no,' cried he, trembling, 'he looks like an honeſt fel-'ley.'—'An honeſt felley, ye raſcal! 'an honeſt felley is a very proper per-'ſon to tell that yo are a rogue. O 'that ever I ſhould be yoaked to a foo'!' —'I am no more a foo' than other folks,' cried he, juſt loud enough to be heard. 'Than other folks, ye blockhead!' ſhe rejoined, as loud as ſhe could bawl; 'I 'ſuppoſe yo mean me. I a fool, ye 'dog!—There, take that;' and here ſhe ſeized the mug, and throwing it at her huſband, it flew over his head, whilſt the liquor was pretty equally divided between all the three. She now burſt into tears, ſobbing out—'Caw me a foo', 'ye barbers mon yo; I doant deſerve to 'be treated a this'n, I doant, ye wicked 'munſter yo.'

Lucius here ſlipped out, and calling his ſervant, the *honeſt courageous* farmer followed him to the door, ſcratching his head; but looking behind him, and ſeeing his wife ſeated in a chair at the other end of the room, he whiſpered—'It is 'well you were here, meaſter, or I be-'lieve I ſhould ha' murdered her.' Lucius made no anſwer; but mounting, and riding off, told him he would ſend a waggon for his hay; and immediately went to take a view of the devaſtation made among his trees, when he found eighteen or twenty of the largeſt oaks lying ready to be carried away.

Agreeable as this diſcovery might appear, Lucius was under ſome perplexity, on thinking how he ought to proceed with the farmer. He now viſited ſeveral of his other tenants, from whom he learned nothing worth mentioning. They were, in general, honeſt, plain men, blunt, and extremely ignorant: and afterwards paid a viſit to the miniſter of the pariſh, with whom he dined. On his return home, he obſerved, at a ſmall diſtance from the road, a farm-houſe belonging to the ſame manor; hither he went, and entering without ceremony, thought he obſerved a wildneſs in the looks of the people, that ſeemed to expreſs a good deal of fear and apprehen-

ſion.

ſion. At firſt, he fancied he might be known, but he was ſoon of a different opinion; for the woman riſing from her ſeat, with a trembling voice aſked what he wanted; and, in the ſame inſtant, the huſband ſlipped out at the back-door. Lucius replied, that he was very ſorry if his being there gave them any uneaſineſs; and, ſo far from doing them any hurt, he would ſerve them to the utmoſt of his power. The woman eyed him very attentively, and ſtood for ſome time ſilent, which only ſerved to increaſe his curioſity; at laſt ſhe thanked him, and aſked again what he wanted. 'Want!' ſaid he; 'why, you behave ſo oddly, that I 'want to know what is the matter. You 'look like a good ſort of a woman,' added he, 'and I ſhould be glad to drink a diſh 'of tea with you, which I had rather have 'here than at a publick-houſe.'—'Lack-'a-day,' ſaid ſhe, 'we never drink ta; 'but yo ſhall be welcome, if yo'll ſend 'for it, and cook it yo'r ſelf; for I 'doant well know how to go about it.' On this Lucius gave her a guinea; the tea and ſugar were bought, and a tea-pot and two earthen cups and ſaucers borrowed; but when the change was brought to Lucius, he gave it amongſt the children. This entirely won the good woman's heart; ſhe now loſt all her fears; and, at his requeſt, readily ran to call her huſband; who was no ſooner ſeated, than Lucius informed him, that he was a gentleman who had a pretty eſtate in that part of the country, but, as he was upon a frolick, he did not chuſe to tell his name. He then urged the farmer to let him know the cauſe of that diſorder which, on his entering the houſe, was viſible in all their countenances.

'You great folks,' cried the honeſt man, 'have no notion of the misfor-'tunes and cares that ſometimes fall 'upon us, who are forced to ſtruggle 'hard to get an honeſt living. One 'bad ſeaſon puts us back ſo far, that 'ſeveral good ones can hardly repair our 'loſſes. This, meſter, is my caſe. 'About four years ago, I had a rot 'among my ſheep, which killed above 'hauf, and thoſe the beſt o' my flock; 'and as my corn proved bad, I could 'no' pay my rent: this put me behind 'hond, which my lonlord excuſed, and 'promiſed not to diſtreſs me; but as he 'is dead, and the lond ſold to one Squire 'Monley, his executors, as they conno' 'ſeize my ſtock, threaten to throw me 'into jail, for the hauf year that is ſtill 'due. This makes me o' moſt diſ-'tracted. There is near a quarter due 'to my new lonlord, and if they ſhould 'let me alone, I know no' when I ſhall 'be able to pey him. But, werriday*, 'I ha' no hopes that they will forbear 'any longer. Though my fears keep 'me awake, I every morning dread the 'leet; and when I riſe, I tremble to 'think that, perhaps, the next neet I 'may lig in a priſon; and when it grows 'dark, I am glad that once more I 'ſhall ſleep in mine own bed, and be 'ſecure till morning. Sunday is, in-'deed, a happy dey; I then enjoy my 'ſecurity, but as the neet comes on, 'my fears return. O meſter, it breaks 'my heart to think what will become of 'my poor family, which you ſee is 'none of the ſmalleſt! I am a feard to 'go about my work. I tremble at the 'feet of a ſtroanger. I hardly know 'what to do. In ſhort, I am o' moſt 'mad.'

Lucius was ſo extremely affected at the moving expreſſive tone, and the artleſs ſimplicity with which the poor man told his diſtreſs, that he could ſcarcely refrain from tears; and it was with much difficulty that he concealed his concern.

'Well, but ſuppoſe you ſhould tell 'your caſe to your new landlord,' ſaid Lucius; 'if you can give him proof that 'you are an honeſt man, he may, per-'haps, take the debt upon himſelf, and, 'rather than loſe a good tenant, give 'you time for payment. I know him, 'he is a good-natured man, and I dare 'ſay he will not be hard upon you.'

'No, no,' replied the unhappy man; 'I could ſooner dee than do it. I could 'never ſpeak freely to ſuch a rich mon. 'I am not uſed to ſuch company. Be-'ſides, it would ſignify nothing. It is 'a miſerable life to be all'as in fear.'

'Now I have thought of ſomething,' cried Lucius, with a forced ſmile, 'that 'I am ſure will do. Have you not ſome 'timber growing on your land?'—'Yes,' returned the farmer; 'but what 'then?'—'Why, I'll tell you,' replied Lucius; 'ſuppoſe you cut it down and 'ſell it, and pay your debt with the

* A word of nearly the ſame meaning as Well-a-day.

'money; Mr. Manly will never miss it.'

The farmer here held up his hands, and his wife examined him more narrowly, and, if poſſible, with greater terror than before. At laſt, the honeſt man ſtarting up, as if affronted, ſhocked and inſulted, cried—'Get out o' my 'houſe, ye villain; do ye tak me for a 'rogue?' And here he ſeized a large oak ſapling, that ſtood in the chimney corner. Lucius got up, and was beginning to ſpeak in his own defence; but he had hardly opened his lips, when he was interrupted, 'Yo a gentleman! 'yo the devil!'—'Ay,' cried the wife, 'it is the devil ſure enough, for all he 'has hid his cloven foot. Here, gi' 'me the money,' cried ſhe to the children; 'there, tak yo'r curſt money,' added ſhe, throwing it at him; every geſture expreſſing the fright and agitation of her mind. Lucius endeavoured in vain to ſpeak; 'Get out,' was ſtill repeated; and the huſband holding up his ſapling, advancing, cried—'I'll 'ſee if he be the devil or no.' On this, poor Lucius retreating backwards, tumbled over the threſhold into the yard, and the door was immediately clapped to, and locked. He received, however, not the leaſt damage by the fall, except what his coat and wig ſuſtained; for a heap of friendly dung, that had been kindly raiſed by ſome cows and horſes, received the fallen, though formidable Lucius. But, though his bed was ſoft, it was not a fit place to reſt in; he aroſe therefore immediately, when he overheard the poor honeſt man cry out to himſelf—'God forbid that I ſhould be 'ſuch a villain, as this fellow would ha 'me be. I'd go to a jail firſt. If I 'am miſerable, I am honeſt at leaſt, and 'after aw, that is ſome comfort.' Mean while the ſervant who was walking in the yard, ſeeing Lucius in this diſorder, ran to his aſſiſtance; but, finding him already upon his legs without ſpeaking a word, in a moment broke the door, which it ſeems was a very ſlight one, to pieces. The woman was unhappily fainted away in a chair, and the good man was aſſiſting her; him he ſeized by the collar, and in an inſtant threw up his heels, and was preparing to revenge the abuſe done to his maſter, when Lucius put aſide the blow, and with difficulty dragged him away, for he quitted his hold with much reluctance. But they had hardly mounted their horſes, when the farmer's ſon and a ſervant man and maid who had heard the buſtle, the two firſt from the ſtable, and the laſt from the dairy, came running to the field of battle. A ſpeedy retreat was abſolutely neceſſary, for this was now an improper time to hold a parley; they, therefore, having gained the gate of the yard, ſet ſpurs to their horſes, and were ſoon out of ſight.

Thus, Madam, I have given you the hiſtory of one day's ramble; and, if nothing prevents, I ſhall very ſpeedily ſend you the ſequel of the ſtory of theſe two farmers, with ſuch oppoſite characters: mean time, I am very much your ladyſhip's, &c.

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXII.

YOU think it ſtrange, Madam, that though Lucius ſhould relate the diſcourſe of the farmers in the dialect of the country, I ſhould have memory ſufficient to retain the pronunciation; and from this remark you infer, that I have had more regard to your diverſion than to the veracity of an hiſtorian. But here you are greatly miſtaken; you ought to conſider the difficulty of living in the country, without catching the peculiarities of the language. This I have ſufficiently obtained, ſo that I have nothing more to do than to remember the words; the pronunciation I have already. I have a good deal of the country accent in my ordinary converſation, and whenever I am diſpoſed to it, can talk in the true dialect almoſt as fluently as the ſprightly milkmaid, or the wife of a ploughman.

The day after the adventure of the two farmers, I was no ſooner ſtirring than I heard an unuſual buſtle below ſtairs, and ſeveral perſons talking very loud, with ſome ſounds, which, though I could not perfectly underſtand, ſeemed to expreſs great amazement. My woman could give me no ſatisfaction; I therefore deſired her to ring the bell, when a ſervant entered the room, with as much terror in her looks as if ſhe had juſt ſeen a ghoſt. 'What is the matter, 'Mary?'

'Mary!' ſaid I; 'you look frighted.'—'O law, Madam,' cried ſhe, 'wud you* think it: Did you ever hear the like? The devil has appeared to my † neam and my naunt Saunders, and teld them, that as how—as how——' 'As how what?' returned I. 'Why as how,' continued ſhe, 'he wud ha him cut down aw the 'ſquire's trees, and he wud gi' him a power o' money for them; and he gived them ſome money, which was, I ſuppoſe, for arneſt; but they wud no' tak' it. Indeed, Madam, it is true; for, I verily believe, we ſhall ha' the w'oll ſtory in print.'—'Pho, pho, is that all?' cried I; 'it is an idle tale, take my word for it. Pray, what ſort of a devil was it?'—'O! he was a meety civil devil at firſt,' ſaid ſhe, 'and as like a honſome man as ever you ſeed; but, at laſt, he vaniſhed out o' the door, as one may ſay, in a flaſh o' fire; and then they ‡ made the door after him, when an ugly devil came pop through the key-hole, and wud fean ha' murdered the good mon; but the hondſome devil poo'd him away, and wud no' let him; but, as they went out, they had like to ha takken the ſide o' the houſe wi' em; for the doore was broken aw to pieces, and to be ſure there was a great ſmell of brimſtone. I mar'l whether the handſome devil had no' great ſaucer een, when my neam was going to ſtrike him; for Goody Simple ſays, ſha thinks ſha heard ſay as much. But the ugly devil had two great platter een, like balls of fire, and turned into the terribleſt creature that ever was ſeen.'—'There is nothing in it, Mary,' ſaid I; 'I am ſure of it.'—'Nay, Madam,' ſaid ſhe, 'to be ſure you know beſt, and I am a'moſt o' your mind; for though they ſay, Old Nick can dizen himſelf like an angel of leet, yet yo know as how he can never go without his cloven foot; and Betty Saunders looked wi' aw the een in her head, but cou'd na ſee it. But, methinks, it is a pitty ſuch a fine ſtory ſhu'd no' be true; for, of aw things, I like to hear about ghoſts, and haunted houſin, and ſuch like. Our Robin, Madam, loffed at Goody Simple, and ſaid ſhu was a lying awd witch, and talked as thof' he would kick her out o' the houſe; but we wud no let him; and then he flew into a paſſion, and ſaid his een were no more like platters, nor balls of fire, than hern, and if ſhu ſaid it agen, he wud kick her a—; breech, I mean, ſaving your preſence.' Here ſhe dropped a curtſey. 'But,' continued ſhe, 'we could no tell what to mak o' that; for the ſquire came in, and ſaid—"Huſh, not a word, Robin;" and then ſtaid to hear the woman himſelf, while ſhe eat the meat I giv'd her quietly, and made me fetch her a mug of ale.'

'Well,' ſaid I, 'I have enough of this idle ſtuff; tell John he muſt go and bring Mrs. Saunders to me.' Here Lucius appeared, and added—'And her huſband too; and bid him be ſure to tell him he muſt not be frighted; for I have ſome good news for him.' And then coming to me, as Mary left the room—'Well, my dear,' ſaid he, 'you find I am mounted on the wings of fame; Mary, I ſuppoſe, has given you a full account.'—'O yes,' ſaid I, 'they are reſolved to make a devil of you; they have already collected ſome diabolical circumſtances; and I don't doubt but, before night, they will have dreſſed up you, and your man, with all the terrors that the moſt wild imagination can invent.'—'No matter,' ſaid Lucius, 'though they paint me in the character of a devil, the portrait they give of me is ſo unlike the original, that I ſhall never be known by it. If poor Robin is already ſuch a monſter, what muſt he be by to-morrow morning, when the ſtory will be ſpread through the whole county, and every one has added ſome dreadful circumſtanc—to the fiction? Horns and hoofs will be the leaſt of his deformities. Had the old woman ſtaid till then, before ſhe brought us the

* *You*, in this county, carries with it ſomething of the idea of a compliment, as expreſſing more reſpect than *Yo*; and for this reaſon, huſbands and wives in particular, who, on common occaſions, politely as they think, make uſe of the word *You*, whenever they quarrel, conſtantly contract it into *Yo*.

† My neam, and my naunt; other counties ſay, gaffer and gammer.

‡ Shut the door.

'new

'news, poor Robin would have gaped, 'and ſtared, and wondered, with the 'reſt. However, I am glad the honeſt 'farmer is ſent for. The poor man's 'diſtreſſes have touched me very nearly, 'and ſomething muſt be done for him. 'I intended to ſend to him this after-'noon, but I am better pleaſed that I 'ſhall ſee him this morning, ſince he 'will now have a few hours taken from 'his anxiety, and added to his hap-'pineſs.'—'A valuable conſideration,' ſaid I, 'that ought not to be forgot, 'whenever we intend to confer an ob-'ligation.'

In about two hours time, the honeſt farmer made his appearance on horſe-back, with his wife behind him, freſh ſhaved, and both dreſſed out in their Sunday's garb. All the ſervants, in an inſtant, ran out to ſee them, except my woman, and Robin, who was purpoſely ſent out of the way, on a meſſage to Nottingham; for they had been informed of their coming by John, who returned near an hour before. They diſmounted at the door, when a volley of queſtions were in a moment diſcharged from every mouth, to which it was impoſſibe for either of them to anſwer. This Lucius and I obſerved from the dining-room window. I immediately went down, and found that the men had now ſur-rounded the farmer, and the maids his wife, whom they all viewed with looks of aſtoniſhment, all deſirous of being anſwered firſt, as thinking their own queſtion of the moſt conſequence. I ſtood in the hall near a minute, to obſerve this ridiculous ſcene; but, whatever anſwer they had received, I obſerved a general air of diſſatisfaction, almoſt as great as that which appeared immediately after; when, in order to draw the good couple from the clamour of this torment-ing perſecution, I ordered them to be conducted into a back parlour facing the garden; and I could hear diſtinctly, as they ſeparated, one cry—'No een of fire!' Another—'No cloven foot!' And, from different voices—'No horns! No 'tail! No nothing, I think. It's a 'pity! Ah! what a fine ſtory is here 'come to nought!'

They had been in the parlour about two minutes when I went to them: I found them ſtanding; but taking a chair myſelf, inſiſted upon their being ſeated, which, after ſome clumſey ſcrapes from the one, and as aukward curtſies from the other, they at laſt complied with; but ſat together, cloſe up to the wall, in the moſt diſtant corner of the room. As ſoon as this ceremonial was over, which laſted ſome time—for theſe country peo-ple certainly think good manners con-ſiſts in being troubleſome.—'Mrs. Saunders,' ſaid I, 'they tell very ſtrange 'things of you. You have been deal-'ing with the devil it ſeems; at leaſt he 'has been paying you a viſit.'—'Who, 'I deal with the devil?' cried the good woman, in a fright; 'Lord help me! I 'hope I ha' nothing to do wi' him.'—'I hope ſo too,' ſaid I; 'but, pray what 'foundation is there for this ſtrange 'ſtory?' Here ſhe related it, in much the ſame manner that Lucius had done, only omitting her huſband's account of his misfortunes, and making uſe of the terms, Handſome devil, and Ugly devil, to make a diſtinction between them: but ſhe miſtook one circumſtance; which in-deed had, as ſhe underſtood it, a very diabolical appearance; for ſhe aſſerted, that the laſt time Lucius and Robin en-tered the houſe, they came in through the key-hole, and broke the door to pieces as they went out. But here the huſband interpoſed, and ſet her right; when ſhe apologized for her miſtake, by ſaying, that ſhe ſaw the door locked before ſhe fainted away, and when ſhe came to herſelf, ſhe found it broke to pieces; and as ſhe was before pretty ſure it was the devil, ſhe thought it moſt natural for him to come in at the key-hole, and to take the ſide of the houſe, or the door at leaſt, away with him, when he went out; for this ſhe remembered to have heard, when a child, was his cuſ-tom. And ſhe concluded with aſſur-ing me, that ſhe would not tell a lye about it. 'I believe ſo,' ſaid I, 'and I am very well pleaſed with your 'ſincerity; for, as I know the ſtory 'better than you, you could not have 'deceived me.'—'That is very ſtrange,' cried the honeſt man, with a look of amazement. 'Know it better than we! 'Why, Madam, you was no' in my 'houſe too!'—'If it be ſtrange,' ſaid I, 'it is true; but I heard a very dif-'ferent ſtory this morning.'—'Why, as 'to the matter of that, Madam,' cried the wife, 'folks tell ſo many lyes about 'it, that I am aſheamed to hear them: 'and wud you think it? they are angry

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'at me, a cauſe I weant ſey as they ſey, 'and wull ha' it their own wey, whe-'ther I wull or no.'

'Well, that is not your fault,' ſaid I; 'but you ſhould not have ſo readily 'imagined it to be an evil ſpirit. Nor 'ſhould you, Mr. Saunders, have been 'ſo ready to conclude him a rogue. 'You ought at leaſt to have heard what 'he had to ſay in his own defence, for 'it was not without reaſon that he made 'the propoſal of your cutting down 'Mr. Manly's trees. You may take 'my word for it that you are both miſ-'taken. I know every particular of the 'ſtory, You, Mr. Saunders, gave a 'very moving account of your misfor-'tunes to a very worthy gentleman, the 'perſon you call the handſome devil. 'He heartily pitied you: he reſolved to 'ſerve you; and I aſſure you, that you 'may now ſleep ſecurely, and awake 'without dread; for he hath pleaded 'your cauſe ſo effectually to Mr. Manly, 'that he has promiſed to take the debt 'upon himſelf, and to wait till you can 'conveniently pay him.' The farmer lifted up his eyes, and in an extaſy, cried out—'God bleſs 'in!' and then ſeemed endeavouring to ſay more, but ſtopped, as if the ſtruggle in his breaſt between joy and gratitude choaked up his voice: however, ſome tears, at leaſt as expreſſive as words, ſtood ready to fall from his eyes, which, with once or twice turning aſide his head, he wiped away with the back of his hand. Mean while, the good woman cried out, in a ſhrill key—'A hondſome devil! A hondſome angel! 'God reward him, and the 'ſquire to 'boot.' But what made the elevation of her voice more remarkable, was the low trembling diffidence with which ſhe ſpoke before. There was now a ſilence of at leaſt half a minute, which ended in the old woman's burſting out a crying, which ſhe did moſt heartily, repeating ſeveral times, with her hand on her huſband's knee, and her eyes fixed very affectionately on his—'Well, I was never 'ſo glad in aw my life—no, never in aw 'my life.' At laſt the farmer cried, lifting up his eyes, and looking at me—'An angel! aye, an angel indeed! or, 'after aw the uſage I ha' gi'n him—— 'Well, God's bleſſing leet upon you 'aw!'—'I thank you, Mr. Saunders,' ſaid I, 'if you reckon me among the 'number. But here comes either your 'landlord or your friend.'

Lucius, who had been walking in the garden, in order to give me time to prepare them to ſee him, was now coming up an avenue facing the door; but, at the mention of the word Landlord, I obſerved that the poor man's diffidence and reſerve, which began to wear off, immediately returned, and his features in a moment became contracted: perhaps his joy was damped by the very idea of a perſon whom he had before conſidered only as an object of fear. But, however this be, not the leaſt alteration appeared in the wife, except a little female ambition, or rather that regard for decency and decorum of character, which is as viſible in the ſpruce dairy-maid as in the dutcheſs. She therefore took her eyes from her huſband, and her hand from his knee, laid ſmooth her clean though coarſe white apron, pulled down lower a pair of old-faſhioned ruffles, and ſtroaked her hair under her cap: and this was done with the natural motion, and compoſed look, which ſometimes makes all the diſtinction between theſe actions, when performed by a country houſewife, and the more affected airs of ſome lady of diſtinction.

Lucius now opened the door; when I cried—'O Sir, is it you? I have pre-'pared them to ſee you; and you may 'ſafely come in, without being taken 'for a devil.' And then addreſſing myſelf to the farmer—'Here is your friend,' ſaid I; 'do you know him, now he has 'changed his dreſs?' Lucius returned my compliment; and then running to the farmer, who was ſtanding biting his hat by the ſide of his wife—'My ho-'neſt friend,' ſaid he, 'I am glad to 'ſee you. Well, are you diſpoſed to 'knock me down now?' The farmer ſcraped, the wife curtſied, and both begged his pardon. 'Well,' replied he, 'you find I don't reſent your treatment 'of me. But, Madam, won't you fa-'vour me with a glaſs of wine, to drink 'to my new friends?' added he, turning to me. 'To be ſure,' ſaid I, and rung the bell; on which a ſervant coming, the wine was called for, and being brought, the man was ordered to retire. Lucius filled, and taking the farmer by the hand, wiſhed him happier days; and having each of them drank their glaſs, he deſired the honeſt man to take a turn or two with him in the garden; and at the ſame time begged the favour of me to go with them, alledging, that I might leave my woman to keep Mrs. Saunders company.

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As this ſtory of the appearance of the devil had ſpread with wonderful ſwiftneſs through the country, Lucius was unwilling it ſhould be known that he had any hand in it: and, indeed, he had not the leaſt ambition of being diſtinguiſhed among the country gentlemen by the name of the Handſome Devil; a title which would be inevitably given him, was he known to be the principal actor. And beſides, as he had more tenants to viſit, he would not have it mentioned that he had ever viſited any of them, ſince the reſt might expect to ſee him in the ſame manner, and being put upon their guard, might fruſtrate his deſign of penetrating into their characters, manners, and circumſtances. Theſe motives were the riſe of this preconcerted plot, of making him appear rather as the friend of Lucius, than as Lucius himſelf, before the farmer's wife; whom, though a very good ſort of a woman, he was unwilling to truſt with a ſecret of ſuch conſequence.

We were no ſooner in the garden, than the farmer, addreſſing himſelf to Lucius, ſaid—'You mun excuſe me; 'I conno' thank you as I wud. If you 'could read my thowts, there wud be 'no need of words to tell you my joy, 'my ſurprize, my gratitude. But ye 'mun forgi' me, if I ſay I love you: 'for it is no' my fault; I conno' help it. 'And this lady mun forgive me too. 'Our ladies are ſo proud, they weant 'ſpeak to a poor mon; but ſhu is ſo 'good, ſo free, and the meſſenger of ſuch 'good news, that I conno' help loving 'her; and my heart will ſay, in ſpight 'o' me, "God bleſs her, and my kind 'freend!" and e'en let it ſay ſo and it 'wull; for if I did no' gi' my heart this 'vent, I verily believe it wud burſt. 'I never preyd ſo heartily in aw my 'born days, and never ſaid prayers wi' 'hauf the pleaſure I ſay theſe two or 'three words. You have made a new 'mon o' me: I verily believe I could 'o'moſt pray for you as well as a par'ſon; aye, as well as thof I read in a 'book. Thank you, thank you.'—'God bleſs you too,' we both replied, at the ſame time, with a ſatisfaction, though leſs tumultuous, as delightful, at leaſt, as his. And indeed, the poor man appeared raiſed above himſelf; the tranſports of his joy, by getting a vent in words, ſeemed to become more exquiſite. He talked with a greater volubility of ſpeech; to which a half-pint glaſs of wine, which he had lately drank, might perhaps contribute. His eyes ſparkled with affectionate gratitude, and a kind of delightful rapture ſeemed hovering over every lineament of his countenance.

The good man was now ſilent; but, after a ſhort pauſe, reſumed—'Is this the 'mon I turned out o' my houſe? Is 'this he that I was yeaſterday going to 'ſtrike? Well, no matter; had I uſed 'him kindly, I ſhud no' ha' know'd 'him ſo well. I wud ha' done ony ho'neſt thing for him, for ſaving me from 'a jeyl; I wud ha' look'd upon him as 'my beſt freend. It wud ha' been a 'kind action, and I ſhud ha' remem'bered it as long as I lived; but me'thinks I ſhud no' ha' loved him ſo 'weel as I do now. But, good Sir, 'are you ſure Squire Monly weant be 'hard upon me?'—'Never fear it,' replied I; 'I will anſwer for your land'lord.' He thanked me; and then looking at Lucius, cried—'My generous 'friend, mun not I know to whom I 'am obliged? Mun not I know your 'neame?'—'O yes,' replied Lucius, 'this you ſhall ſoon know; but I muſt 'deſire you to keep it a ſecret, and not 'to let even your wife or ſon know that 'my name is Manly.'—'What, my 'lonlord himſelf!' cried he, in a rapture; 'then indeed I ha' nothing to 'fear. My lonlord that I have abuſed! 'my lonlord that is ſo generous!—I 'can only wonder. What ſhall I do 'for you? How mun I mak you amends?'—'Leave that to me,' Lucius replied. 'Here are forty guineas, that I have in 'my pocket for you, to pay the execu'tors of your late landlord, which you 'muſt do this evening, before you go; 'you may give me a note for the mo'ney, and I will contrive a way for you 'to pay it again.' I then took my turn; and telling him, that as he had been ſo diſtreſſed, he and his family might want ſome of the common neceſſaries of life; to ſupply which, I deſired his acceptance of five guineas; which he received, bowing low, with a ſubmiſſive kind of joy and rapture. Lucius now gave him an account of his going to Thomas Clod's, and of his telling him that he had cut down his trees: but, as he was yet undetermined how to proceed with him, deſired him to keep a ſtrict watch, that none of them were removed, and no more cut down, without giving him immediate

mediate notice; adding, that he would pay him handſomely for his trouble: and dinner being now ready, the farmer went in, and rejoined his wife. They both dined at our table; and after Lucius had again privately enjoined the good man to ſecrecy, they, with many warm, though homely teſtimonies of gratitude, took their leave. I am, Madam, your lady-ſhip's moſt affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXIII.

DEAR MADAM,

LUCIUS has been again among his tenants, and has now finiſhed his ramble. The laſt time he was out upon this expedition, he obſerved a man with white locks, and a venerable aſpect; but want and care, rather than extreme old age, ſeemed to have ſilvered his hair: his eyes were hollow, his perſon tall and meagre, and he had a placid ſerenity in his countenance that beſpoke a kind of joyful compoſure of mind. His coat was of broad-cloth; and, though worn threadbare, and well patched, was perfectly clean. He was coming out of a houſe, with a bag in his hand, which he ſeemed deſirous to conceal. The oddneſs of his appearance, in a country village, joined to an air that ſeemed to command reſpect, engaged the attention of Lucius; who became curious enough to form a reſolution to know, if poſſible, who he was, and what that could be which he endeavoured to conceal; and therefore diſmounting, he led his horſe by the bridle, and followed at ſome diſtance, till he ſaw him enter a ſmall thatched houſe, and ſhut the door after him. Thither Lucius directed his ſteps, and, on his arrival, was going to knock at the door; when turning his head to the window, he obſerved the ſame perſon ſtanding before a table, and with his eyes lifted up to heaven with a look of thankfulneſs, utter a ſeemingly devout ejaculation, and then ſit down by the ſide of an elderly woman. He now gave a rap at the door with the butt-end of his whip; on which, as it happened not to be latched, it immediately flew open; when, to his great aſtoniſhment, he ſaw an earthen plate of grains ſmoaking on the table, which they endeavoured to conceal, by throwing the end of a ragged damaſk napkin, which ſerved for a table-cloth, over it, and immediately roſe up.

Lucius's ſurprize was hardly to be expreſſed. 'Is this,' ſaid he, 'what 'occaſioned ſuch marks of devotion, 'ſuch thankfulneſs and gratitude? Was 'it this that you were ſo deſirous to con-'ceal?'—'Yes,' replied the old man: 'but why ſhould you rudely preſs to 'diſcover what I was unwilling to have 'known? Why ſhould you thus mor-'tify the little pride that is left me?'—'I beg pardon,' ſaid Lucius, 'for an 'intruſion which I cannot juſtify; but 'ſatisfy my curioſity, and let me know 'by what terrible diſaſter you are drove 'to this dreadful extremity. Yet ſtay; 'let me firſt prevail upon you to provide 'ſome proviſions more fit for human 'creatures. You muſt have a great 'mind, to be able to ſupport ſuch want, 'and to rejoice over a meal that would 'make others of leſs piety repine at 'Providence. Though in the midſt of 'affluence, I could almoſt envy your 'reſignation, that beſpeaks you more 'than human. Accept of this, Sir,' continued Lucius, throwing down five guineas upon the table, 'and provide ſome-'thing more proper for your refreſh-'ment.' The old man, firſt lifting up his eyes to heaven, took up the money with an air of extreme thankfulneſs, accompanied with very polite expreſſions of gratitude; and immediately gave one of the pieces to his wife, who preſently returned with ſome beef-ſteaks and a loaf: however, in this interval they took their ſeats, and the old man began in the following manner—

'I don't wonder at your being ſur-'prized at a meal which, when I was 'of your age, would have given me 'equal aſtoniſhment; but want will 'make us reliſh the coarſeſt fare, and 'hunger ſweeten the moſt diſagreeable 'morſel. I was born a gentleman, but 'ſpent a good fortune in the ſervice of 'an ungrateful family, and, as I am now 'perſuaded, in a very bad cauſe. I am 'a native of Scotland, and was educated 'in the national religion; but, carried 'away by the heat of youth, and a ſet 'of ridiculous principles which I im-'bibed from ſome of my companions, 'I ſold my eſtate, and went over into 'Ireland, and entered as a volunteer in 'King James's army, where I fought 'in defence of a religion the moſt oppo-

'site to my own. But I muſt do myſelf the juſtice to ſay, that ambition was not my motive. I was preſent at the battle of the Boyne, and in almoſt every battle afterwards, in which my maſter diſtinguiſhed himſelf by a ſuperior cowardice. But I will not tire you with a repetition of what every body knows already. At the battle of Aghrim, when our army was entirely routed, it was with difficulty I made my eſcape; and, as I loſt all my baggage, my fortune, which before was almoſt exhauſted, was by this event entirely ruined. I returned into Scotland with a wife and two young children: and pleaſed with the hopes of ſeeing my relations, particularly a tender father, and a brother with whom I had been brought up from my infancy, I arrived at Kirkaldy, the place of my birth; where I found that my father died at London ſome time before. Here I ſoon experienced, that my wants, inſtead of entitling me to relief, only ſerved as a pretence for treating me with contempt. Nay, my neareſt relations hardly knew me. It was with difficulty that I got acceſs even to my brother, though of the ſame political principles with myſelf. I was ſuffered to wait in the hall like a common ſervant. I was choaked with indignation, yet I ſmothered my reſentment. In ſhort, after only lying a night or two in his houſe, with a barbarity unknown to ſavages, I, with my wife and children, after many affronts, were *civilly* turned out of doors, and obliged to ſhift for ourſelves.'—Strange effect of immoderate ſelf-love!' ſaid Lucius; 'in it's extremes the moſt odious of all the paſſions, and the moſt fruitful of miſchief! How ſtrong muſt it be, when it can thus cancel the ſacred bond of nature, and diſſolve the holy tie of brotherhood!'—'Aye, aye,' replied the old man; whoever is in want, let him apply to a ſtranger, and he will have no gall poured over the friendly morſel. If he is in diſtreſs, let him fly to his friend, and he will not be humbled with the contumely of a proud relation. I was now a ſtranger in the very town where I was born, and where I had ſpent the greateſt part of my life. Stung to the quick with this indignity, and enraged beyond all poſſibility of bearing the place, my native country became hateful to me. I reſolved to ſet out for England; and had it not been for the humanity of ſome perſons, with whom I had a very ſlender acquaintance, and, particularly, a gentleman, a friend of my father's, who, with a chearful benevolence, that doubled the obligation, ſupplied me with what was neceſſary to bear the expence of my journey, I might, perhaps, have been driven to the extremity of begging my bread.

'You ſee, Sir,' continued he, 'that, amidſt the greateſt misfortunes, the contempt of my relations ſtill ſticks neareſt my heart; not that it now gives me any great uneaſineſs, for my affection for them is converted into a calm and ſettled contempt. Yet, were our circumſtances changed, I would ſtill ſerve them to the utmoſt of my power. I would not, indeed, give them my eſteem; this I reſerve for the deſerving.—But I tire you with my reflections.

'We arrived in London; and, by the aſſiſtance of a friend, I entered into trade; but by ridiculouſly lending my note to an acquaintance, the moſt pernicious and deſtructive cuſtom that ever was introduced amongſt tradeſmen, I was reduced to very great extremities. However, theſe were at laſt ſurmounted, and, with a mixture of ſucceſs and misfortune, I continued in the ſame ſtation for upwards of twenty years: and, believe, me, Sir, abject as my condition now ſeems, it appears to me even preferable to the anxiety I then frequently felt, from the fear of duns, the dread of a jail, and the uneaſy apprehenſion leſt ſome honeſt man ſhould loſe by my misfortunes: the laſt, in particular, was a conſtant ſhock to my humanity; and where the perſon was in low circumſtances, and had a family that, by my means, would be ſufferers, the thought ſtung me to the ſoul, and gave me the moſt pungent anguiſh. Add to this, the many mortifications I received from the purſe-proud tradeſman, whoſe common maxim is, that *Every man may be rich if he will*; and that frequent breach of veracity, with reſpect to times of payment, which the neceſſity of my affairs ſometimes rendered unavoidable. This laſt, a love of juſtice, and a fixed and ſteady regard for truth, rendered moſt irkſome and painful: in

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'one word, it was a wound feſtering in 'my conſcience.

'At laſt, I ſold my ſtock, paid my 'debts, and retired to this place, with 'my wife and a boy of ten years old. I 'chearfully maintained my family by 'my labour while my ſtrength laſted, 'and enjoyed a ſerenity that I cannot re-'member to have taſted in the midſt of 'my early affluence. With a conſcience 'undiſturbed, and a mind free from care, 'I applied myſelf to reflection, and 'ſoftened the fatigue of labour with 'large draughts of knowledge, with 'an improvement in piety, and the ſtudy 'of virtue and religion. I had before 'learned the ways of men; I now took 'a review of my own. I had long 'ſince imbibed the philoſophy of the 'ſchools: I now reduced it to prac-'tice; and laying by my Seneca and 'Epictetus, applied myſelf to the ſtudy 'of the Scriptures, and to open my 'heart for the reception of thoſe divine 'truths which lead the mind to God. 'Wrapped up in a happy ſolitude, I 'conſider every thing here below only 'as it tends to my eternal welfare; and, 'while I graſp at an immortality of joy, 'find but little inconvenience from the 'coarſeneſs and indelicacy of my poor 'repaſt. I have no other aſſiſtance but 'what I receive from my dear boy, 'who is now above twenty. With a 'filial affection he forces me to receive 'a good part of the fruits of his labour; 'but, alas! that is much too little to 'find him in cloaths, and us in the 'means of ſubſiſtence; and I am loth 'to have my wants known, leſt this 'ſhould again ſubject me to contempt; 'and more particularly, as it might 'prejudice his hopes; for he is exceſ-'ſively fond of a farmer's daughter, 'who, though her father is a weak, and 'no very honeſt man, is very worthy 'of his affection. We have lived for 'ſome time on thoſe ſallads which the 'fields afford, but they are not now to 'be had. Young nettle-tops, boiled, 'were next our daily food: of theſe 'being tired, I ſome days ago taſted 'ſome freſh grains; I was hungry, and 'found them palatable, for what will 'not hunger make ſo? And, as I fre-'quently amuſe myſelf with fiſhing, by 'which I ſometimes gain a delicious 'repaſt, I am not ſuſpected of wanting 'them for my own nouriſhment. This 'circumſtance affords me no ſmall plea-'ſure, for all temporal happineſs conſiſts 'more in the opinion of others than on 'what we eat and drink.

'I have juſt mentioned my ſon to you; 'he is a lad of probity and integrity; 'and, if I may judge from the preſent 'you have juſt made me, you are in cir-'cumſtances that will allow you to be 'of ſervice to him; let me recommend 'him to your protection.'

Pity, Lucius ſays, was the leaſt of all the paſſions which ſeized him, upon hearing this ſtory; his compaſſion gave way to ſurprize and admiration; and the graceful manner with which this truly venerable man expreſſed himſelf, ſtill heightened that eſteem, which was juſtly raiſed by ſuch exalted piety, ſuch contentment and reſignation. Lucius, therefore, very frankly replied, that he judged right as to his circumſtance, but that he had not leſs inclination than ability to ſerve them all. He deſired his friend-ſhip. He took him by the hand, and, with the ſtrongeſt expreſſions of eſteem, aſſured him, that he would do him all the ſervice in his power. The ſteaks were now ready; and the good man aſked him, if he would not do him the honour to partake of a meal which he himſelf had enabled them to provide. As Lu-cius had not dined, he very readily ac-cepted the invitation, on condition that he and his ſon ſhould dine with him the next day, when they would conſider what could be done for the young man. This was immediately agreed to; and, while they were at table, Lucius deſired him to explain ſeveral paſſages in his ſtory, which he did not perfectly under-ſtand, and particularly, what he meant by lending of notes. This being done, the diſcourſe again turned upon the hardſhips he ſuffered with reſpect to his way of living; hardſhips, which Lucius ſaid were unknown to the reſt of man-kind, and which he could not think of without expreſſing the moſt lively marks of aſtoniſhment. The good man ſmiled. 'At firſt,' ſaid he, 'this gave me ſome 'uneaſy thoughts, but I ſoon learnt to 'conquer them, and to be thankful for 'the coarſeſt morſel. I repreſented to 'myſelf the excruciating tortures which 'rack numbers of mankind; and aſked 'myſelf, what compariſon could be 'made between exquiſite pain and a 'mouthful of unpalatable proviſions: I 'acknowledged the difference, and bleſ-'ſed the Being that made our caſe pre-

'ferable to theirs. The hardſhips endured in ſieges are much greater than ours; for, at the ſiege of Derry, a plate of grains would have been delicious fare. They would have looked upon this as a bleſſing, and ſhall I repine at what would have filled them with joy? Beſides, could I have made my caſe known, which my averſion to the contempt which always attends poverty, and my regard for my ſon, has prevented, we might have lived in a much better manner; for whey, and butter-milk, would not have been refuſed me. My wife and I are both ſatisfied, and thoroughly convinced, that true happineſs does not conſiſt in ſuch trifles as theſe: for, wherever there is inward complacency, humanity of heart, and devout thankfulneſs, there is content, there is the nobleſt felicity.'

'Tis very ſtrange,' ſaid Lucius; 'but whoever calls for aſſiſtance, is ſure to meet with contempt and ſcorn from every ignorant blockhead; yet, there is a chain which runs through all nature, by which every ſpecies of beings have a dependence upon each other: but, let us view only man, that proud being, that, in ſpite of all the cleareſt dictates of reaſon, and all the laws and impulſes of nature, would fain perſuade himſelf that he ſtands alone, and free from obligations; wraps himſelf up in ſelf-ſufficiency, and refuſes to confer on another what he imagines he does not want himſelf. The infant no ſooner breathes, than, with a puling cry, he proclaims his wants, which the fond mother is, at firſt, but little able to relieve; he is, therefore, committed to ſtrangers, and receives his firſt obligations from them: he grows up, and daily demands help from his parents; and, as his years increaſe, his dependance, and obligations, become more general, even for the means of life, the ſupport of his very being, and the cultivation of his mind; till, at laſt, he becomes a debtor to thouſands. If he is aſhamed of this dependance, for the ſame reaſon he muſt be aſhamed that he is a man: but if, after this, he refuſes his aſſiſtance, or contemns him that ſtands in need of it, he is no longer a man, but a monſter.'

'Fine reaſons! fine reaſons!' cried the old man, ſmiling; 'but you will never be able to perſuade a miſer, that avarice is a greater crime than poverty; or any body elſe, that to be poor is not to be contemptible.'—'There is no man ſo ſtupid,' ſaid Lucius, 'as to believe that poverty is really criminal, or even contemptible: it is, indeed, in their opinion, a thing to be dreaded; not that they think it infectious, but for fear they ſhould be aſked for what they cannot give conſiſtently with their notions of ſelf-love, nor refuſe without ſome inward commotions on the ſide of humanity. And, for this reaſon, thoſe who, from an immoderate and falſe ſelf-love, ſtudy to keep their humanity under, always take care, for their own ſakes, to repreſent poverty to themſelves as ſomething ridiculous, mean, and contemptible. They are ſenſible of the amiableneſs of the friendly diſpoſitions; and a fear of being ſuſpected to want either them, or the abilities neceſſary for the exerciſe of them, may poſſibly be the principal reaſons why the rich are aſhamed of their poor relations; as it may be thought, that they themſelves are either not ſo wealthy as is imagined, and, therefore, that they *cannot*, or that they have nothing really amiable in them, and therefore *will not*, relieve them. A kind of pride the moſt wicked in itſelf, and the moſt pernicious to ſociety.

'Thus we may derive all the calumny that falls upon the unfortunate, from the ſame ſelf-intereſted views; a ſtruggle againſt the ſtrong impreſſions of nature, an endeavour to ſuppreſs the more generous ſentiments of humanity. From my little experience, I have found, that whenever a man fails, let his probity have been ever ſo conſpicuous, it then becomes neceſſary that his conduct ſhould be arraigned, and more particularly ſo by his relations, and the ſelf-intereſted amongſt his friends; for where no act of humanity is expected, the man may ſtill remain eſteemed. His virtues, ſuch as induſtry, care, and application, are not what they look for; theſe, therefore, are thrown aſide as uſeleſs lumber; but, if an act of humanity be found, though he was then in a capacity

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'to be generous, it is immediately 'thrown into the heap of folfies; nor 'is there an indiſcretion in his whole 'life that can be thought of, but it is 'mentioned, to increaſe the load. No 'wonder, then, that it becomes enor-'mous. Thus want of ſucceſs, which 'no mortal can ſecure, is charged as 'guilt, and the unhappy honeſt man is 'treated with a hundred times more 'contempt and obloquy than the ſuc-'ceſsful villain. And ſelf-love, ſhift-'ing the diſgrace farther from itſelf, 'the relations of a huſband throw the 'greateſt load of blame on his wife, 'whilſt thoſe on her ſide caſt it back 'on her huſband.'

'Will ſhe never have done?' me-thinks, Madam, I hear you ſay. 'Yes,' I anſwer. But you ought to remember, that I have been giving you the hiſtory of a hero in patience; and this ſhould put your ladyſhip in mind, that it does not become you to expreſs much un-eaſineſs at ſuch a trifle as the length of a letter; for I have nothing more to inform you of, but that Lucius, having dined heartily, took his leave, and, with the hopes of ſeeing the good man and his ſon the next day, jogged home. And, therefore, I am at liberty to break off, and ſubſcribe myſelf, your lady-ſhip's moſt ſincere friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXIV.

WELL, Madam, I have now ſeen this venerable old man, whoſe hiſtory I gave you in my laſt; and, I can aſſure you, he perfectly anſwers the deſcription Lucius gave me of him. His ſon is a well-made, agreeable young fellow; and, though he finiſhed his edu-cation in a country village, it ſeems has a good ſhare of learning; but this is not at all ſurpriſing, as his father was his tutor. His behaviour has too much of the gentleman, for him ever to make a good clown; and he has too much baſhfulneſs to paſs for a gentleman. It was eaſy to ſee that he had never been in ſuch company before; for he bluſhed whenever he was ſpoke to, and, when he anſwered, it was with as much diffi-dence, and precaution in placing his words, as if he had been before a magiſ-trate. In ſhort, if his ſentiments are at all anſwerable to the ingenuity of his look, he, with his fair Daphne, or Ama-ryllis, might make a good figure in a paſtoral eclogue.

After dinner, under the pretence of taking a walk in the garden, Lucius conducted us to a neat houſe, juſt on the outſide of the back door, leading into the fields. He aſked the good man how he liked it; and he, as he expected, ad-miring the ſituation, Lucius, in very polite terms, deſired his acceptance of it for life. Our venerable gueſt received this favour with all imaginable teſti-monies of gratitude; while his ſon, by his looks, ſeemed in a rapture of joy: and, indeed, as it has only four rooms, that is, two on a floor, it is a manſion proper enough for an anchorite. Be-ſides, Lucius has promiſed to furniſh it; and I am to make him a preſent of as many books as he ſhall have occaſion for; a catalogue of ſome of which I have engaged our hermit himſelf to write out for me.

While they were taking a view of this ſmall building, a ſervant came to inform us, that the farmer, who had been here ſome days before, deſired to ſpeak with his maſter. Lucius imme-diately gave orders that he ſhould be admitted. The honeſt man came, and ſtepping aſide with him, informed him, that the trees, which he had been ordered to watch, were to be removed the next day. At this news, Lucius ſent for Clod, with orders that he ſhould come directly, and bring his counter leaſe. Lucius had before related the whole affair to Mellifont, and he again to a gentleman of the law, who has an eſtate in this part of the country: he ſtrenuouſly aſſerted, that he ought to undergo the penalty mentioned in his contract; that is, to pay one hundred pounds, to forfeit his leaſe, and to make good the damage; and that lenity, in this caſe, would be an ill precedent with reſpect to the other tenants: whilſt Lucius was of opinion, that as the whole affair had been told to him in confidence, h. . ho-nour would not permit him to proceed to extremities; and the good old man, to whom he now told the ſtory, without mentioning the farmer's name, was of the ſame opinion; but could not help ſmiling at the ſilly fellow's talking of being paid for his trouble, in cutting down trees that he had no right to med-dle with. The converſation then turned on the young man, who was next to be provided

provided for; and being found to be very well qualified for the poſt, he was choſen houſe-ſteward, and an apartment aſſigned him in our houſe, conſiſting of a bed-chamber, a parlour, and a little room for an office.

The joy of the tender parent was now compleat, and tears of gratitude rolled down his venerable cheeks. He lifted up his ſwimming eyes to heaven, and then caſting them down upon us, bleſſed us with an ardour that ſpoke the fulneſs of a heart loſt in devout thankfulneſs. 'O, little did I think,' cried he, 'of 'living to ſee ſuch a day as this! My 'God, I thank thee! and, O bleſs my 'benefactors, as they have been the 'means of bleſſing me!' Here he took hold of Lucius's hand, and preſſed it between his; then raiſing it up to his lips—'I thank you for my dear boy,' cried he; 'I joyfully commit him to 'your care. May it be always his 'ſtudy to deſerve your goodneſs!'

Here the young man, finding his good father make a pauſe, ſtepped forwards, and then bowing—'Excuſe me, Sir,' ſaid he with a tone that ſeemed to ariſe from a mixture of timorouſneſs, and a joy too big for utterance, 'if I want 'words to expreſs my thankfulneſs for 'a favour greater, vaſtly greater, than 'all my hopes. But—a—my grati-'tude—my care and my fidelity—ſhall 'beſt thank you: but what return——' Here he made a long pauſe, and ſeemed quite loſt; when the old man, with a little confuſion in his look, cried—'You 'ſee, Sir, the effects of a want of gen-'teel company; my ſon has no illiberal 'education, nor does he want either 'ſenſe or words to expreſs himſelf, 'when among people of a lower claſs, 'with whom our circumſtances have hi-'therto permitted him only to converſe.' Lucius ſmiled, and clapping the youth on the ſhoulder with a free and familiar air, ſaid, he would take care to remedy that fault; and this freedom of behaviour ſeemed to have an immediate effect, for, in an inſtant, the young man's confuſion and diſorder ſeemed to vaniſh; and being now pretty well aſſured, prompted by a little female curioſity, I deſired him to give us the particulars of his amour with the farmer's daughter. He bluſhed, and, after a ſhort pauſe, conſented; and with more aſſurance, and leſs heſitation, though not without fear and trembling, gave us the following account.

'When I was about eighteen, as I 'was riding back from watering my 'maſter's horſes, they took fright; the 'horſe I rode on ran away with me, 'and haſtily turning ſhort through a 'gap in the hedge, threw me. I lay 'ſenſeleſs for ſome time. When I came 'to myſelf, I hardly knew what had 'paſſed; I endeavoured to recollect 'myſelf, and looking about to ſee 'where I was, immediately caſt my eyes 'on a very agreeable girl, neatly dreſ-'ſed, who was ſitting cloſe by me. She 'lay half reclined, ſupporting herſelf 'with one hand on the graſs, while the 'other, which was ſtretched over my 'breaſt, held a bottle of ſalts; but my 'eyes were hardly open when ſhe aroſe, 'and, taking a ſtep or two backwards, 'with her looks ſtill fixed on me, told 'me, with an air of great humanity, 'that ſhe was glad to ſee me alive, and 'aſked me how I did. I thanked her, 'and complained of a violent pain in 'my head; ſhe was ſorry for it, ſhe ſaid, 'and wiſhed me a good-night. I was 'then ſitting up, and ſeeing her about 'to go, deſired her to ſtay a little, and 'accept of my company; but ſhe 'modeſtly refuſed me. She told me, ſhe 'wiſhed me well, and again bid me 'good-night; and, without turning her 'head, walked away as faſt as ſhe could. 'I ſtill continued ſitting in the ſame 'poſture, when a few drops of blood 'trickling down my face, I lifted up 'my hand to wipe them away, and 'moving it towards the place where I 'felt the greateſt pain, was ſurprized to 'find a handkerchief tied round my 'head, to ſtop the bleeding of a ſmall 'wound; for I was ſo ſtunned with the 'fall, that I never perceived it before. 'I was pleaſed with the pretty girl's 'good-nature; and the next Sunday, 'waiting for her coming out of church, 'having before got the handkerchief 'waſhed, returned it with many thanks. 'She ſmiled, and told me I was very 'little obliged to her, ſince ſhe did no 'more for me than what ſhe would have 'done for any other perſon in the ſame 'condition; and very coldly, but civilly, 'ſaying—"Your ſervant," turned 'away to a young woman; and, taking 'hold of her arm, prevented my ſaying 'any more.'

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'Poor man!' said I, laughing, 'what a diſappointment was this! I ſuppoſe you were a litle mortified at it?'—'No, Madam,' replied he; 'indeed I was not. I had returned the handkerchief, and that was all the view I had in ſpeaking to her. I looked upon her as a deſerving girl; and was pleaſed, that though I had not diſcharged the obligation, I had paid a debt of honour.' Here, obſerving me ſmile—'Excuſe me, Madam,' added he, 'for making uſe of a word, which, I am ſure, does not become the mouth of ſuch a one as me; but, even plowmen know what honour means, and, though they do not make uſe of the word, obſerve what is meant by it.' Lucius ſaid he was in the right, and deſired him to proceed, without minding my looks. On which he reſumed—

'As I had, frequently, an opportunity of ſeeing her, this calm eſteem made me ſometimes ſingle her out for converſation. I overtook her, by accident, in the fields, going a milking; I walked her pace, and ſometimes, when ſhe was returning back, carried her milk-pail: and, by this means, I inſenſibly learnt, from her mind, what I ought to feel in my own. The modeſt ſimplicity of her actions, the innocency of her looks, and the goodneſs of her heart, which was ſure to be affected whenever an object of compaſſion was near, were thoſe charms which I could not reſiſt; and they would, indeed, have been too much for me, had her good ſenſe been leſs remarkable. I was ſoon convinced that what ſhe had done for me was purely the effect of her goodnature. For a long time ſhe ſtrove to avoid me, ſo that it was by ſlow degrees I learned her value. She began to have an eſteem for me. I thought I deſerved no other character than that of her friend; I told her ſo, and ſhe was not diſpleaſed. Innocent in all, ſhe had no idea of love, nor was the name mentioned. At ſheep-ſhearing, at the wakes, and at harveſt-home, ſhe was conſtantly invited by my maſter's daughters, and I joined in the jovial merriment. Our eſteem for each other encreaſed, till, at laſt, it ripened into love: and, when this was known to ourſelves, we were frighted at the difficulties which lay before us; ſhe told me her ſtory, and perſuaded me never to ſee her more.

'Her mother, a woman of ſenſe, and very fond of books, took care of her infancy, and gave her too a taſte for reading, and embelliſhed her mind with many uſeful hints on the excellency of a virtuous character; but ſhe ſoon died, and left her to the management of a weak and hard-hearted father, who marrying a woman much younger than himſelf, ſuffered her to be treated with the greateſt inhumanity. But I will not trouble you with the ſeverities ſhe told me ſhe met with from a wretch of no principles, a cruel ſtep-mother, whoſe delight it was to give her uneaſineſs. Her aunt was enraged to ſee her ſiſter's child treated ſo ill; ſhe took her home, and it was at her houſe ſhe lived when I uſed to have the pleaſure of ſeeing her. An uncle of hers, who reſided in London, has lately left her a hundred pounds, which is all her fortune; for though her father is reckoned to be worth between three and four hundred pounds, ſhe has no expectation from him, as he has now a child by his ſecond wife, who rules him as ſhe pleaſes.

'I have not ſeen her this month, except at church; but with what reluctance I have ſubmitted to this, no words can expreſs. I thought her above me. I feared to bring upon her the reproaches of her relations, who, to be ſure, would never conſent to our happineſs; to her marrying ſo poor a man; one ſo much beneath her. But your generoſity, Sir, has removed this obſtacle. I am in raptures when I think of it. How ſhall I expreſs my gratitude! How deſcribe a joy, which no words can paint! It is too much! You are too good, and I am too happy!'

Well, Madam, was I not in the right to repreſent this innocent youth as a perſon proper to make a ſhining figure in a paſtoral? But you ſee he is above the rank of the Hobbinol of Gay, and would better ſuit the more dignified character of Pope's, or Phillips's gentle ſwains, who, with a greater dignity of ſentiment, attune the warbling pipe to more lofty, more graceful, and harmonious numbers.

About an hour after this, the man returned

returned with Clod. Mr. Manly, without the leaſt deſign of alarming the farmer, had, inadvertently, ſent Robin for him; whom he no ſooner ſet his eyes on, than he recollected that he had ſeen him before; and being told that it was his maſter that went in to drink with him, after he had bought a load of hay, he was in a moſt terrible fright: he, therefore, came trembling, and entered the hall, where Mr. Manly had ſeated himſelf to receive him, with the air of a man going to receive ſentence of death; and having made an awkward bow as he came in, ſlunk into a corner. He was deſired to come forwards, which he did very ſlowly, looking downwards, and knitting his brows; and then ſtood before the awful little man, with a fear that made his lips quiver with a convulſive motion. When he was aſked how his wife did, and whether ſhe ſtill continued the ſame ſubmiſſive creature he had repreſented her; he looked very ſilly, and ſcratching his head, anſwered, 'Yes.'—'Then you 'are your own maſter,' ſaid he again, 'you are above being ruled by your 'wife; and, as you made her keep her 'diſtance, ſhe muſt not preſume to ad-'viſe or direct you in any thing that 'does not concern her.'—'Yes,' was anſwered again. 'Then,' rejoined Lucius, 'you take the whole blame, 'and all the guilt of this affair, upon 'yourſelf. I find I was miſtaken; I 'thought you might have been teazed 'into it by the importunity of a 'wicked woman; a crime that would 'have admitted of ſome alleviation; and 'then, though you would have more 'weakneſs, yet you would have leſs 'guilt.'

The man ſtared, and bit his lips; and, at laſt, ſtammering, cried—'But '—but—but ſhu did perſuade me to 'fell the trees, or I had no done it. 'Shu does what ſhu pleaſes wi' me, and 'I conno' help it. I thowt no harm.' '—Thought no harm!' cried Lucius; 'what, is there no harm in robbing your 'landlord?'—'Ay, ay,' cried the man, 'there is harm enough in that. But 'I mean, I thought no harm in telling 'you ſuch woundy lees about my wife, 'for I am aſheam'd, and wud no' ha' 'people think me ſuch an old foo'; 'yet I love her for aw that.'—'I find, 'however,' ſaid Lucius, with a magiſterial air, 'your word is not to be taken; 'but produce your counter-leaſe'. He now pulled it out of his pocket; and, with a look that ſhewed him ready to ſink with fear, gave it to Lucius, who juſt caſt his eye on the preamble, and returning it, ordered him to read it himſelf: but that was impoſſible; for, after he had read two or three ſhort words, and ſpelt a long one, Lucius obſerved, that his hand ſhook to ſuch a degree, that he would never be able to go through with it.

I was ſtanding all this while in a gallery that, leading to ſome chambers, croſſes the hall; and, looking very attentively over the iron rails, was liſtening, and, at the ſame time, contemplating on my Sancho, ſeated below me, in his two-armed chair; that formidable appearance, which ſtruck ſuch terror into the ſelf-condemned farmer. Juſt at this time, the venerable old man, whoſe name I might have told you before is Trueman, (but ſince I tell you ſo now, it is as well) entered with his ſon, and looking ſtedfaſtly at the farmer, ſtepped up to Lucius, and deſired to ſpeak a word with him in private. He aroſe from the ſeat of juſtice, and walking aſide, they whiſpered for half a minute, and then the old man, in great haſte, ran out of the hall. The judge ſeemed pleaſed; gave a nod, which ſignified a kind of aſſent; and, returning to his ſeat, took the leaſe, and giving it to young Trueman, deſired him to read it, which he had no ſooner done, than Lucius began—'Here you find, that 'you have not only forfeited your leaſe, 'but, beſides, are to pay me one hun-'dred pounds, over and above the value 'of the trees you have unlawfully cut 'down.'

At this inſtant, the gentle Mrs. Clod, with a child in her arms, burſt into the hall, and without the leaſt regard to any body preſent, directed her diſcourſe to her huſband. 'Ah ye foo,' ye block-'head, yo!' cried ſhe as loud as ſhe could bawl: 'ſee what you han browt 'us to. This is yo'r wiſe doings, ye 'oaf yo!' Old Clod looked now more aghaſt then ever, and with his eyes fixed on his wife, who ſtood behind him, deſired her to hold her tongue: but ſhe, lifting up her fiſt, replied, with great fury—'Hold my tongue, ye villain! 'hold my tongue! See this poor baby, 'ye unnatural brute! Yo ha' ruined 'us aw; ye have!' Clod obſerving her

her fiſt held up in a menacing poſture, and hearing theſe ungrateful ſounds, with his head ſtill turned behind him, ſidled nearer and nearer to Lucius, as the leſs terrible object of the two; who, aſſuming a moſt haughty air, commanded her to be ſilent; at which, ſhe running forwards, and puſhing between Lucius and her huſband, (when, in an inſtant, thoſe eyes, which before ſhot lightening, now let fall a plenteous ſhower) blubbered very diſmally, and begged him to pity her, and that poor, pretty, dear, ſweet, helpleſs baby; and inſiſted, that though it was no great matter what became of ſuch a wicked man, ſuch a vile rogue, as her huſband, yet it would be the greateſt cruelty to ruin her, and ſo fine a child, ſo ſweet a wench, as that ſhe held in her arms. But, alas! the judge was deaf to all ſhe could ſay; he ordered a ſervant to turn her out of doors; but ſhe fell on her knees, and, with great earneſtneſs, endeavoured to perſuade him to ſuffer her to ſtay. This favour, at laſt, was granted, only upon condition of ſilence; which was no ſooner done, than Clod, ſeeming to revive and recover ſpirits, from his indignation, cried out—'I could no' ha' thowt 'it: ſhu wud ha' me into jail: well, 'I'll ſee who ſhall ſuffer; I ha' another 'dowter, and her mother wud na' ha' 'ſerved me ſo.'

Lucius now repreſented the heinouſneſs of the crime, and inſiſted upon the penalty: and ordering young Trueman to fill up a bond which he had before ſent for, the farmer ſigned it with leſs reluctance than I could have imagined, only repeating a curſe or two on his wife, loud enough for her to hear, and crying—'I'll be her foo' no 'longer; I ha' another dowter.'

The filling up of the bond took up ſome time, for our young ſteward was not yet very expert at his buſineſs, and his father was not there to aſſiſt him: but the ceremony of ſigning and ſealing was hardly over, when the good old man entered, introducing an elderly woman, and a very pretty young woman of about ſeventeen, whom he led to Lucius. Our judge aroſe, and bowed; and, at the ſame inſtant, farmer Clod cried out—'My 'poor dowter!' and young Trueman dropped an ink ſtandiſh, which he was carrying into his office. Clod's wife gave them all a curſe, and grumbling, left the place, while he ſeized one of the girl's hands, and throwing his other arm about her neck, gave her a hearty ſmack, crying—'I am o'moſt ruined; 'but no matter, I deſerve it. Wull 'yo' forgi' me, wench? Yo are my 'dowter, and yo ſhall be my dowter, in 'ſpite of the devil.' Young Trueman had, during this ſpeech, ſeized her other hand, which Clod had neither power nor reſolution to prevent, and which, with an air of native innocence, ſhe chearfully reſigned to her lover. Her eyes were in an inſtant turned from her father, and fixed with great ſoftneſs on the young man, who gazed on her with a look of mingled tenderneſs and rapture.

This, Madam, was a ſcene which at firſt I could not comprehend, and ſo ſtrange a turn filled me at once with curioſity, and held me in an agreeable ſuſpence: but it was a curioſity too violent to ſuffer me to continue at a diſtance an unintereſted ſpectator. I therefore ran down ſtairs, when old Trueman, with the elderly woman, having joined themſelves to Lucius, to whom they were talking, and accidentally fronting the other three, I could not help ſaying with a laugh—'Well, if after all you are diſ-'poſed for a country dance, I hope I 'may be allowed to make one.' They all ſmiled; and after the uſual ceremony of a few bows and curtſies, and your humble ſervant, and the like, Lucius addreſſed himſelf again to Clod—

'You have now performed,' ſaid he, 'the conditions I demanded; nor ſhall 'I make any reflections on what is 'paſſed, ſince this would expoſe you be-'fore your relations. My thoughts 'are now taken up with the general hap-'pineſs of your whole family. If I 'inſiſted ſo ſtrenuouſly on your paying 'the fine, it was only with a view to 'ſecure ſome part of the fortune of a 'daughter whom you have neglected; 'and by giving the bond to this young 'man, whom you muſt now look upon 'as your ſon, I return it again into the 'ſame family; ſince, as my ſteward, he 'does not need this to make him an ad-'vantageous match for your daughter.' Here Clod, without ſtirring a ſtep, ſtretched out his neck, to ſtare at Trueman; and ſeeming more and more to recover himſelf, drew his daughter back a little, crying—'A proper mon; hay, 'wench. Gi' me yo'r hond;' which Trueman doing, he gave it a hearty

ſhake, ſaying—'God bleſs yo' together. 'I wiſh it with aw my heart. Shu is a 'good wench; I'll ſay that for her.' And then turning to Lucius, bowed ſo low, and gave ſuch a ſcrape, that he had like to have fallen upon his face. The young woman bluſhed, and curtſied; and Lucius having by this time found the bond, which he pulled out of his pocket, preſented it to Trueman, ſaying—'Here, take this, and I wiſh you 'all imaginable happineſs;' while he received it with a look of gratitude and joy. Lucius reſumed—'I am ſenſible 'that what you told me was in confidence: I therefore remit of the rigour 'of my firſt demand. I return you 'your counter-leaſe, and ſhall ſell the 'trees myſelf; I only deſire you to ſet 'the ſame number of plants in their 'room.'—'Ay, marry will I,' cried he, as he received it, 'and as many 'more to boot; and rot me if ever ſhu 'make me ſuch a rogue again.' Now nothing was heard but joy and congratulations. The young woman's aunt, (for that was the perſon that came in with her) as ſhe loved her niece, was very liberal of her thanks and acknowledgments; ſhe kiſſed the young couple, and inſiſted on providing the wedding dinner, as ſoon as they could be aſked in due form at church: for, as ſhe was no friend to licences, ſhe was reſolved that the marriage ſhould not be performed till after this ceremony was compleated, which ſhe thought neceſſary to render it valid. The happy couple were the leaſt tumultuous in their joy, for that was principally expreſſed on both ſides by the eloquent language of the countenance, which ſufficiently told us all they could have uttered; and, perhaps, they choſe that we ſhould rather ſee than hear the expreſſions of their mutual tenderneſs: but it is more probable that, wholly taken up with the preſence of each other, they never thought of us at all, and while they were ſilent, did not ſuſpect that any in the company could underſtand a language which they doubtleſs imagined peculiar to themſelves. But it was not ſo with old Clod, who knew no other way of expreſſing his joy than by capering about the hall, bleſſing the ſquire and his good lady, kiſſing his daughter, and hugging young Trueman. In ſhort, we adjourned into a parlour; when wine, ale, and tea, were called for, which every one partook of as they pleaſed. Nor was the cold ſirloin forgot, which by ancient cuſtom is a joint devoted to hoſpitality; for this was placed on a ſideboard, near the farmer, whoſe uneaſineſs having coſt him a dinner, he wiſely, upon the return of his ſpirits and his ſtomach, did not ſuffer it to ſtand neglected. At laſt, they all took their leave, but not till our young ſteward had ſhewn his intended bride her future apartment, which Lucius, in the preſence of the aunt, promiſed ſhould be immediately furniſhed for their reception.

You ſee, Madam, that innocence and peace do not always bleſs the cottage: vice ſometimes finds an entrance under the loweſt roof; and care and ſorrow can hover over the brow of humble virtue. With theſe ſage remarks, which inform you of nothing but what you knew before, I conclude my letter, having no more to add, but that I am, and ſhall ever be, your ladyſhip's moſt affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

P. S. Upon recollection, I think I ought not to have informed you that the wicked woman, who makes no inconſiderable character in the above letter, is a ſtep-mother: but, ſurely, you will not do me the injury to ſuſpect that, by inſerting it, I would inſinuate a reflection upon others, who, with the name, have quite different diſpoſitions. A certain lady, whom you dearly love, and to whom your couſin owes ten thouſand obligations, is a glorious exception; and I know ſome other ladies, beſides Miſs Biddy, who, from a mother-in-law, have received all the tender indulgences, and all the obligations they could reaſonably expect from a real parent. If you ſhew your aunt this letter, as I find you have done ſome others, don't let her overlook this poſtſcript.

LETTER XXXV.

DEAR MADAM,

YOU ſee what a variety of impertinences your deſire of frequently hearing from me has forced me to commit; but what elſe can be expected from rural ſcenes, which, though the haunt of lovers, are the moſt unfruitful of intrigues? for where almoſt every one acts from nature, nothing of the marvellous

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can be expected. Yet I ſhall now open a ſcene of wonders, that will give you the greateſt aſtoniſhment.

One day laſt week, to our no ſmall ſurprize, we received a preſſing invitation to dine with Mr. Stevens, the ſprightly old gentleman, whoſe character * you were ſo well pleaſed with, and whom we had not ſeen ſince the diſgrace of his ſuperlatively pious ſiſter Prudilla†. Our deſire of renewing the acquaintance of ſo agreeable a companion, made us readily comply with his requeſt. Lucius therefore ordered the coach to be immediately got ready, and we ſet out ſoon after.

Upon our arrival, we were received by the gentleman himſelf, with his uſual affability and freedom; but with leſs of that humorous gaiety in his look which indicates the friend and chearful companion. After paying us ſome handſome, though late, compliments on our nuptials, he informed us, that his ſiſter, who he confeſſed had injured us in his eſteem, being now dangerouſly ill of a conſumption, deſired to ſee us, that ſhe might unburthen her mind as much as poſſible, by confeſſing her guilt, and endeavouring to obtain our pardon; and that, as ſhe was now awake, if we pleaſed, he would introduce us himſelf. We immediately conſented, and followed him to her chamber. We found her ſeated in an eaſy chair, one arm hanging negligently down by the ſide, which, by it's thinneſs, ſeemed immoderately long. She was worn to a ſkeleton; her head leaning back in a languid poſture, diſcovered a thin, pale, and dejected countenance, which, the moment ſhe raiſed it, expreſſed all the ſigns of inward confuſion, horror, and guilt. She fixed her eyes on us, ſighed, and waving her hand, deſired us, with a weak voice, to ſit down by her, which we immediately did; when Mr. Stevens left us, and, before he ſhut the door, aſſured his ſiſter, that he would take care that nobody ſhould come to interrupt us.

What an object was here! How wretchedly depraved muſt that mind be, that could triumph before an enemy ſo reduced, ſo humble, and ſo worthy of pity! Lucius could not: his concern was extremely viſible; and, though I never ſaw him in a more ſprightly humour than he was in the whole morning, it was now inſtantly vaniſhed; and his countenance had an air of ſolemn gravity and compaſſion. With a tone of great humanity, he aſked how ſhe did. She thanking him, anſwered—'I am extremely ill. O, Sir, I am going—I am going to that Being, who will not be impoſed upon by falſe appearances. Oh! the horrors of a guilty mind! O conſcience! conſcience! I have plotted your ruin—I have endeavoured to deſtroy your peace—your fortune—your happineſs here—your ſoul hereafter!' Then, wiping her eyes—'Oh! I aſk your pardon—Can you forgive me? Can you? Will you?' This was ſpoke with ſuch a beſeeching look, and uttered with ſo much earneſtneſs, that it would have been barbarous to have kept her any longer in ſuſpenſe. Lucius, therefore, immediately replied, in that tender tone which nature gives to the voice when the heart is deeply affected with compaſſion—'Yes, Madam, I heartily forgive you. But why this eagerneſs? Do you think me incapable of pity?'—'No, Sir,' added ſhe, 'I know you are not: but, alas! you know not what you ſay! You don't know how much I have been your enemy. But don't—don't withdraw your forgiveneſs,' continued ſhe, looking ſtedfaſtly in his face; and then caſting her eyes on the ground, added—'It was I that cauſed your father to be arreſted. It was I—I that perſuaded his creditors to throw him in a jail.'—'How!' cried Lucius, reddening; and then, after a few moments reflection, reſumed with a ſigh—'Well, this is not a time for reproaches.'—'Reproaches!' cried ſhe; 'I deſerve them all—I know I deſerve them all, and am prepared to receive them. O Madam! I loved Lucius with a criminal paſſion, and, under a veil of ſanctity, thought to conceal myſelf from the eyes of the world; but I could not do it from the all-piercing eye of Heaven. But my plots were diſcovered, and you were a witneſs of the ſhameful, but juſt, treatment I met with at your aunt's, when all my contrivances to break the match betwixt you and this gentleman were laid open. Your aunt's reproaches ſharpened the ſting of my guilty conſcience; your and your couſin's triumph over

* See Letter IV. Letter VIII. † Letter XIX.

'me made my mind boil with rage and 'ſhame, and diſappointed love. I re-'turned home—I contrived ways of re-'venge, and ſought ſtill to deſtroy your 'peace. At laſt, I thought of Mr. 'Manly. I knew ſome of his creditors; 'I flew to them, and, under a pretence 'of viſiting their wives, indulged the 'malice of this wicked heart. This, 'at firſt, was all my view: but ſoon, 'Madam, I recollected that your huſ-'band had a tender and generous mind: 'I hoped his duty, and his affection to 'his father, would be too ſtrong for his 'paſſion for you—I hoped he would 'relieve him, and I was not deceived. 'I prepared to let your father know 'that he was an impoſtor, that he had 'greatly leſſened his fortune; and, by 'this means, thought myſelf again in-'fallibly certain of breaking the match: 'but ſoon I learned that theſe hopes 'were vain; Lucius had himſelf in-'formed him of the whole affair—He 'was forgiven, and I plunged in freſh 'deſpair. O Lucius! I durſt not now ſee 'your father. Oh! a guilty conſcience! 'a guilty conſcience! Crime followed 'crime, till I ſinned beyond all hopes 'of mercy.'—'It is an ingenuous con-'feſſion, however,' cried Lucius, 'and 'I heartily forgive you. May God for-'give you too! I'll promiſe for my 'father.'—'I thank you,' ſaid ſhe, and ſtopped; and then continuing ſilent for ſome time, ſhe at laſt fixed her eyes on Lucius, and reſumed—'I have another 'affair, but I cannot mention it to you, 'I cannot ſpeak of it—but, as it is 'more neceſſary to be diſcovered than 'any thing I have yet ſaid, I have wrote 'it down. Here, look at this paper—'read my ſhame, and then let me ſpeak 'to you alone. You will know it time 'enough, Madam. I can ſcarcely think 'of it before you, and muſt therefore 'beg of you to retire.'

You won't wonder, Madam, that I was very much ſurprized at this propoſal, which appeared the more extraordinary, by her manner of introducing it. What could I think? It had an odd appearance. Lucius ſeemed thoroughly ſenſible of this, and therefore endeavoured to detain me. 'This is very 'ſtrange!' cried he: 'What concern can 'I have in any ſecret affair of yours, 'which my Felicia may not be acquaint-'ed with? Or what can that be, which 'is fit only for me, and not for her to 'know?'—'Dear Madam—dear Sir, 'oblige me,' cried ſhe, with an earneſt-neſs that pleaded more than her words: 'ſurely this requeſt cannot be hard for 'you to grant!' Lucius made no anſwer, but, receiving the paper, went to the window to read it. As ſhe ſat with her back to the light, he might do it as ſafely here as in another room, without raiſing her bluſhes by the diſorder of his looks; and, perhaps, her chair was ſet in this manner on purpoſe. Mean while I aroſe, and walking out of the room, pulled the door after me; which I had hardly done, when I heard Lucius ſtamp, and cry out—'I a child by you, Ma-'dam! 'Tis falſe. 'Tis a notorious lye.' And then, running to the door, deſired me to come in, with a look that ſhewed him in a moſt violent paſſion. 'It ſeems,' added he, 'that this important affair, ſo 'improper for you to hear, is what you 'have an immediate concern in; ſhe has 'the impudence to ſay here—but read 'it yourſelf. What a vile, ſcandalous 'lye! I a child by her!'

As I was but juſt on the outſide of the door when he called me, I immediately returned; and, being much leſs diſturbed than he, had the precaution to ſhut it, as I entered the room. I muſt confeſs that I was in a very queer ſituation of mind: I was far from being eaſy. But it is impoſſible for me to give you any idea of Lucius's behaviour: he ſtamped, he ſtared, his colour changed from a deep ſcarlet to a livid paleneſs; and then looking towards the chair, with rage and contempt ſtrongly painted in his countenance—'Is this your repentance?' cried he, 'wicked and abandoned wretch! 'In ſuch a condition, too!—Your af-'fectation of modeſty!—My wife muſt 'not know it—You can't ſpeak of it 'before her!'—'Why ſo warm, my 'dear?' replied I, with a ſmile: 'if 'there is nothing in it, it can only ſerve 'to encreaſe our deteſtation of a wretch 'that, ſo near her death, could be guilty 'of ſo vile a ſlander.'—'*If!*' cried he, with a ſnappiſh haſtineſs: 'It is an ab-'ſolute lye—ſhe is the laſt woman that 'I would be guilty of ſuch an affair 'with—ſuch an antidote to deſire!—'I ſhould be as much aſhamed of my 'taſte as of the crime.'

We were now alarmed by an affair of a very different kind; for Prudilla, who had heard every word, unable to ſupport the ſhock of being treated in ſo ſevere a manner,

manner, at this inſtant fainted away, and fell out of her chair; and we beheld a pale and almoſt lifeleſs being lie ſtretched out on the hearth, in a manner that called for immediate relief. To what ſtrange revolutions is the human mind ſubject! Not all our indignation, not all the fury of paſſion, could prevent our running immediately to her aſſiſtance, and giving her that ſuccour that her caſe required. Lucius raiſed her head from under the grate, where ſhe was in danger of being burnt, and, with my aſſiſtance, lifted her into her chair, and there held her, while I ran to call her brother. He came, but it was near half an hour before we brought her to herſelf. At laſt, ſhe opened her eyes, and her brother forced her to drink a glaſs of wine and hartſhorn; but ſhe no ſooner recovered her ſpirits, than ſhe burſt into tears; nor could ſhe utter any thing but ſighs for a conſiderable time, endeavouring all the while to conceal her bluſhes by covering her face. At laſt, ſhe deſired her brother to leave us; and, when he was gone, not a word was ſpoke for near two minutes more: for ſhe was ſo weak, that Lucius, dreading ſome ill conſequence might again attend his not being able to maſter his temper, reſolved to let her begin firſt, and to wait with patience till he could hear what ſhe had to ſay in vindication of this *notorious lye*, as he called it. This he let me know as ſoon as Mr. Stevens left the room, by writing his reſolution on a piece of paper, which he eaſily did, as there was a pen and ink upon the table, which ſtood cloſe at his elbow. I began to be tired of this ſuſpenſe, when ſhe began, with a deep ſigh—'Now you know my 'ſhame; but I did not think I ſhould 'be treated in this manner. O, you are 'very cruel, you might have read the 'paper out.'—'Is it not falſe?' cried Lucius; 'had you ever a child by me?' —'Pray let me go on,' ſaid ſhe; 'you 'ought, indeed, to have read the paper 'out, before you fell into ſuch a paſ'ſion.'—'Did not I read one lye at 'the beginning?' interrupted he again; 'to what purpoſe ſhould I read on to 'find more?'—'Hear me, hear me,' rejoined ſhe, 'I take the ſhame and guilt 'upon myſelf, why ſhould you not then 'hear me? You lay at our houſe 'about two years ago; twice you lay 'here; if you remember, it rained, and 'you could not go home. Oh, how 'ſhall I tell the reſt! You was waked 'by a woman in your bed.' Lucius bluſhed, and looked at me, and immediately replied—'I acknowledge it, 'Madam; but proceed. 'I left you 'while you were aſleep; I was gone 'before it was light; and the firſt time 'you lay here, you found our chamber-'maid's handkerchief lying by the 'ſide of the bed, which, the next morn-'ing, ſhe owned. The odiouſneſs of 'my crime made me glad to conceal it; 'I bluſhed at my own wickedneſs, 'and, to preſerve my character, left the 'handkerchief.'

'I own it all, Madam,' cried Lucius, 'and I ſincerely beg your pardon. 'Indeed, I ought not to have been ſo 'warm; but I beg you would forgive a 'language which I acknowledge did 'not become me. My ſuſpicion fell 'where you intended it ſhould; but 'how barbarous, how ungenerous, was 'it in you, to fully the character of an 'innocent creature, by laying your 'guilt to her charge!'—'If that be ſo 'great a fault,' returned ſhe, 'I have 'much to anſwer for. Oh, I am a guil-'ty creature! but the ſhame I then felt 'for my faults, though it prompted me 'to do all I could to hide them, though 'it made me bluſh in private, and al-'moſt hate myſelf, was nothing to the 'horror I now feel.'—'Pray, Ma-'dam,' ſaid I, 'proceed with your ſto-'ry; I long to hear what is become of 'the child.'—'Lucius, Madam, may 'remember,' continued ſhe, 'that I 'went to London, about four months 'after the laſt time he lay at our houſe: 'there, inſtead of viſiting my friends, I 'lived very retired, and, pretending 'that my huſband was gone abroad, 'was well reſpected, and, at laſt, 'brought to bed of a fine girl. After 'my return home, I ſent for it into the 'country, and it is now at Clifton, 'where it paſſes for the child of a poor 'woman, whom I had taken a fancy 'to, and reſolved to keep out of cha-'rity. In that paper is a direction 'where to find it; and in that paper too, 'you will ſee that I have left this living 'witneſs of my ſhame ſeven thouſand 'pounds, which is all my fortune; and 'if ſhe dies, it is to be equally divided 'between you and my brother: for 'you are the perſon I love deareſt, and 'have moſt injured. But my brother 'will ſhew you my will; he has conſented

'to

'to every thing; and, therefore, I have 'choſen him and you for my executors. 'But I am quite ſpent—I hope I ſhall 'ſee you after dinner.' This we promiſed, and retired.

I don't know, Madam, whether I can vindicate to myſelf my thus laying open a ſecret affair, that reflects ſo much upon the character of my dear Lucius. How triumphantly you cry out—'O the 'man of immaculate virtue, the modeſt, 'the ſober, the religious Lucius! in 'bed with a ſuperannuated old maid! 'Mighty pretty! Who could have 'thought it?' But however you exclaim, I know you will be pleaſed to find him a little lower in your eſteem; or elſe what is become of all your pretty hints—that he was too good to be married—That you ſhould not like a huſband ſo extremely perfect—and that you thought it neceſſary that a man, who was to be your companion for life, ſhould have ſome faults, that he might be better able to excuſe yours. Think of this, and ceaſe your exclamations. As to Prudilla's conduct, it is vaſtly more inexcuſable: but I conſider her as an humble penitent, and, therefore, ſhall not expatiate on her crimes. I have been melted by her tears; I have heartily forgiven her, and this has made me omit ſeveral ſpeeches which had I inſerted, though they might have kept up the enthuſiaſtick part of her character, would have weakened your pity, by making her appear ridiculous.

I have the honour to be, Madam, your ladyſhip's moſt ſincere, and moſt affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXVI.

DEAR MADAM,

WE had ſtaid ſo long with Prudilla, that, when we went down, we found the dinner almoſt ſpoiled; for Mr. Stevens, imagining that this might be the laſt time of our ſeeing her alive, was not willing to interrupt us, being very ſenſible that we had affairs upon our hands of much greater moment.

The cloth was no ſooner taken away, than Mr. Stevens, having lighted his pipe, addreſſed himſelf to Lucius, and told him, that his ſiſter had deſired him to ſhew him the will before it was ſealed up. 'You know, already, I ſuppoſe,' ſaid he, 'that you and I are appointed 'her executors, and I don't doubt but 'ſhe has told you in what manner ſhe 'has diſpoſed of her fortune. Tell me 'now, honeſtly, don't you think my 'ſiſter out of her ſenſes? Self-intereſt, 'perhaps, may biaſs me, but you are 'an unprejudiced perſon: therefore, let 'me know what you think of her leaving ſeven thouſand pounds to a 'ſtranger. Had ſhe left it to a female 'friend, to you, or any other man of 'merit, I ſhould not have cared, I 'would not have troubled myſelf at it's 'going out of the family; but to leave 'it to a little brat, that can but juſt go 'alone—Pox! it's enough to make one 'mad.' Here he began to puff, as if he had a mind to ſmother us; and, in an inſtant, we were ſurrounded with a cloud of ſmoke. Lucius ſeemed extremely confounded; when, to give him time to think of a proper anſwer, I replied—'She 'has taken a fancy to the child, I ſup'poſe; perhaps it may belong to ſome'body very dear to her.'—'A fancy, 'Madam!' cried he; 'it is a very odd 'fancy, that ſhe, who never in her life 'could endure children, ſhould, at theſe 'years, take ſuch a fancy to one, as to 'leave it all ſhe is worth. I very 'bluntly told her ſo; and, as I refuſed 'to have any thing to do in this affair, 'without better reaſons than ſhe was 'pleaſed to yield me, ſhe referred me to 'you, to give me ſatisfaction.'—'That 'I can eaſily do,' ſaid Lucius; 'you 'are her brother, and I have a right to 'know the whole affair, which I, though 'moſt concerned, was ignorant of till 'this morning: Suppoſe the child 'ſhould be her own?'—'Why, aye,' cried the old man, after a ſhort ſilence; and then deliberately poured out a mighty cloud, which he had been collecting from the time Lucius began to ſpeak—'there is ſomething in that, in'deed: but how could ſhe, who is ſo 'curſed modeſt, that ſhe could not men'tion it to her own brother, tell it you?' —'Who ſhould ſhe tell it to, but to 'the child's father?' ſaid I. 'The child's 'father!' he rejoined, holding his pipe in his hand, and ſtaring with a look of the utmoſt aſtoniſhment; 'what, Lucius 'the child's father! he! the modeſt Lu'cius! my young philoſopher! he make 'a whore of my ſiſter! Do you know, 'young man,' added he, 'what you

'deſerve

'deſerve for doing our family this ho-
'nour? Suppoſe I ſhould order my fel-
'lows to cool your courage in the
'horſe-pond, ſhould not I ſerve you
'right? Hay, tell me that, you young
'dog? Could you find nobody, but
'my ſiſter, to make a whore of? A
'woman old enough to be your mother,
'ye little whelp! So you muſt come
'here preaching your damned nonſenſe,
'about virtue and honour, and the
'devil knows what; and I, like an old
'fool, muſt ſit liſtening and hugging
'you to my boſom, while you, forſooth,
'was only waiting for an opportunity
'to debauch my ſiſter!' Here he ſtarted up, crying, 'The horſe-pond! Ay, and
'it ſhall be the horſe-pond, if it coſt me
'a thouſand pounds! By the Lord
'Harry, I'll make a ſouſed mackarel
'of him!'

Lucius, who at firſt ſat with a kind of puſillanimous ſhame, as, perhaps, imagining, that as Mr. Stevens thought him the aggreſſor, he had an undoubted right to complain, now ſtarted from his chair, and ſtepping between him and the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket; then turning haſtily round, and clapping his hand to his ſword, which he drew half out of the ſcabbard, he cried—'Hold, Sir, I ſhall take upon
'me to ſecure the door; you muſt not
'go out without my leave: how far I
'have injured either you or your ſiſter,
'ſhe may, if ſhe pleaſes, inform you;
'for I think it beneath me to palliate
'any fault of mine, by laying it upon
'her.' This was ſpoke in a reſolute tone; but the old man, not ſeeming to mind what he ſaid, having his whole thoughts taken up with his poſture, cried out—'There is a young philoſo-
'pher now! a pretty fellow to make me
'a priſoner in my own houſe;' and then caſting his eyes on the glittering ſteel, 'Well done, Don John! There is a dog
'for you now! He has lain with the
'ſiſter, and now would murder the bro-
'ther! A fine philoſopher!—But I
'won't draw—I'll ha' none of your
'cold iron in my guts—I'd ſee both
'you and ſiſter at old Nick firſt!' Then wheeling upon his heel, he added, 'You
'ſhall as ſoon roaſt as ſpit me.'

The moment Lucius ran to the door, I flew to the window, and throwing open the ſaſh, called Robin and John: but hearing the old man declare his averſion to cold iron, I drew in my hand, and was going to ſhut the window, when he came to me, and putting out his head, firſt threw away his pipe, and then called out Sam and Harry: but we both called in vain; for, as we found afterwards, they were all drinking together in the cellar, with the butler. I was, all this while, fretting, trembling, and blaming myſelf, as the cauſe of all this diſturbance, by the imprudent manner in which I had diſcovered the affair; and was the more uneaſy, as I thought Lucius had ſufficient reaſon to be offended: and this reflection was ſo painful, that, ſtupid with vexation, for ſome time I had not the power of contriving any probable means of ſetting all right again. At laſt, I recollected the paper which Prudilla had given to Lucius, and he to me; and, as the old man was ſtill leaning on my ſhoulder, and calling for his ſervants, I deſired him to be pacified, and told him that, on condition he would ſit down and be eaſy, I would convince him that Mr. Manly was much leſs to blame than he imagined. Mr. Stevens, finding that it was to no purpoſe to expect any aſſiſtance from his ſervants, readily complied; and, ſeating himſelf in the window, while Lucius took a chair next the door, I gave him the paper, ſaying—'Here, Sir, is a ſhort ac-
'count of the whole affair, written by
'her own hand.' He took it, and mumbling to himſelf, uttered now and then an articulate ſound, making his remarks to himſelf, as he went on—"*Bluſhes!—Die with ſhame!*" And then raiſing his voice—"*Be ſurprized to*
"*hear that you have had a child by me!*"
'Be ſurprized to hear it!' cried he.
'What the deuce! did he get her with
'child in his ſleep! "*Remember—*
"*aſleep!*" 'Aye, it muſt be ſo.' Here he burſt out a laughing, crying
—'Well, this is very extraordinary!
'Get a child in his ſleep! No, that
'can't be it neither; for ſhe ſays, "*he*
"*remembered it.*" 'Well, let's ſee.—
'O, I have it, "*A woman came to bed*
"*to him in his ſleep.*" 'Aye, that
'may be; but ſhe did not get him with
'child, I hope. "*Early in the morn-*
"*ing—dark.*" 'The deuce! What a
'rare modeſt ſiſter I have got! Well,
'it can't be helped. Why, now I
'ought, like an aſs, to aſk his pardon.
'Faith, I ſhould not have wondered

'if

'if he had ſwore a rape againſt her. "*The handkerchief!*" O, the ſly devil!—and ſo he was, to ſuſpect Jenny Law, as pretty a girl as any in the pariſh.'

Here, tearing the paper, he went to Lucius, crying at every ſtep, 'I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon, with all my heart. Odſo, what a racket have I been making in vindication of the honour of my ſiſter, when her honour is not worth a button!'

They now ſhook hands, and in a few minutes were as good friends as if nothing had happened. Prudilla had dined in her chamber, and afterwards laid down for about an hour; and then ſent to inform us, that ſhe ſhould be glad of our company. She now looked much better than when we entered the room before; notwithſtanding her having, ſince that time, ſuffered a very great expence of ſpirits. This might be occaſioned by her having now no more painful ſecrets to diſcloſe. Her countenance was tolerably ſerene; and, though ſhe could not look upon us without confuſion, it was a confuſion unmixed with that ghaſtly horror which before gave an additional wanneſs to her diſcoloured cheeks and lips. She was riſing as we entered the room; and, as ſhe took the ſame ſeat, we took ours. After enquiring how ſhe did, and particularly, whether ſhe had received any hurt from her fall from the chair, which ſhe aſſured us ſhe had not, ſhe began—

'I have now diſcovered my ſhame to you both; and, whatever you think of me, I deſire you would not, when I am gone, expoſe me among my friends. I have now little elſe to do, but to prepare for that other world to which I am haſtening. Death is a dreadful ſtroke, but I muſt go through it. It is guilt, it is guilt that makes it terrible. I am very loth to die. It will be your duty, Sir, to take care of this child. I am very ſenſible, that the dear infant has no right to any part of the fortune you obtained by your marriage with this lady, and therefore I give her mine. To ſpeak my mind freely, it is with great uneaſineſs that I ſupport the thought of leaving her to ſuch an atheiſt as you. My religious principles are very different from yours; or, rather, I queſtion whether you have any religion at all. However, you are a moral man; and if mere morality would ſave you, you bid fairer than moſt others for happineſs. The morality of the beſt is imperfect; and, therefore, not fit to juſtify us in the ſight of God.—But, alas! why do I talk of morality! I that build all my hopes on your doing juſtice to my child, in giving her, if not religious, at leaſt virtuous principles, drawn from this morality! I, who have ſo heinouſly ſinned, that I hardly durſt hope for mercy! I, that have abuſed all the good ſenſe that God has given me, and behaved like one that never taſted of the ſweetneſs of his grace! Oh, I feel the corruptneſs of my own heart! I was ſurely born in ſin, and in iniquity did my mother conceive me. I am ſenſible that my own righteouſneſs is but as filthy rags.'

It was now impoſſible for me, Madam, to forbear ſmiling. I could not help giving my aſſent to theſe laſt words, and ſaying to myſelf, that I believed ſo too. Lucius kept his countenance pretty well: he heard himſelf loaded with abundance of religious abuſe, without the leaſt diſcompoſure in his look: he ſhook his head, liſtened ſtill with pity in his eyes, and never once attempted to interrupt her. After a good deal more to the ſame purpoſe, ſhe let us know that ſhe had had a pious education, and a very early experimental ſenſe of religion. That, as ſhe was converted betimes, as ſhe thought then, though now ſhe doubted it, ſhe had always a great abhorrence of vice; but grew proud of her religious attainments; and this, added to a temper naturally peeviſh, made her cenſorious. At laſt ſhe loved Lucius; ſhe ſtruggled againſt her weakneſs; ſhe repreſented to herſelf the difference of their age, and the little probability that he would marry a woman twenty years older than himſelf: however, ſhe ſtrove to allure him by her behaviour; but it was all in vain: ſhe then changed her conduct; her paſſion became criminal; and, after a ſtruggle between that and her conſcience, flattered herſelf, that, as ſhe had ſuch proof of her being one of the elect, it was impoſſible ſhe ſhould ever be a caſt-away; and, confiding in this, ſhe reſolved to give way to her paſſion: ſhe then drank in iniquity like water; and going on from one crime to another, ſinned beyond all hopes of mercy. Poor Lucius was the cauſe of all: had ſhe never

never known him, ſhe might have ſtill been virtuous: but love made her commit what her conſcience condemned. She could not bear her own reflections; ſhe, therefore, endeavoured to conceal her actions from the light, from herſelf, from him, from the world.

This, Madam, is the ſubſtance of a very long diſcourſe, of which I was heartily weary; nor ſhould I trouble you with it, if it did not ſeem neceſſary to give you a portrait of her mind, and to let you ſee how far even religion, when raiſed upon falſe principles, had an influence in corrupting her heart. It was a gloomy ſyſtem, collected from abſtruſe paſſages in Scripture, in oppoſition to the plaineſt; big with abſurdity, contradiction, and blaſphemy; contrary to every ſentiment we can form of the Deity, as a wiſe and good being, and to the plaineſt dictates of unprejudiced reaſon.

Lucius did not chuſe to make any anſwer to this fine harangue, which ſhe did not conclude without giving him ſome exhortations to repentance: and, indeed, ſhe had drawn it out to ſuch a length, and her ſpirits were ſo exhauſted, that ſhe was obliged, immediately after, to lie down: we therefore took our leave, promiſing to ſee her again in two or three days time. We drank tea with Mr. Stevens, who behaved in the moſt friendly manner. The will was read, and he had now no objection to being his ſiſter's executor.

We had ſcarcely drove from the door, when I obſerved that Lucius appeared extremely thoughtful. We were now free from company, and perhaps he might dread leſt I ſhould take hold of this firſt opportunity to make him ſome reproaches: but I was reſolved to diſappoint him. He watched my looks; he eyed me very attentively from time to time, and ſeemed deſirous of divining my thoughts, while, with a modeſt diffidence in his countenance, he ſeemed to wait till I began the diſagreeable ſubject. I believe we had been full five minutes in the coach without ſpeaking a word to each other: at laſt, I began with aſking him, what were his thoughts of Prudilla? 'I hardly know,' ſaid he, 'what to think of her; ſhe has confeſſed 'herſelf guilty of very black crimes. 'Could I have conſented to conceal my 'father's misfortunes, I had been juſtly 'puniſhed. I muſt have been ruined. 'What would your father have thought 'of me?'—'It is very true,' ſaid I, 'it 'was an infernal ſcheme; the very idea 'of it makes me tremble. It was happy for me, that your generous ſentiments, which would not ſuffer you to 'conceal it, broke all her meaſures. 'But the child——' added I, ſmiling; 'why, I am made a mother at a time 'when I leaſt thought of it. But did 'your ſuſpicions fall where ſhe intended 'they ſhould?'—'Yes, my dear,' ſaid he, giving me a moſt affectionate look, that ſeemed to thank me for treating him ſo gently; 'I returned the handkerchief, which the young woman 'received, indeed, without a bluſh: 'this I perfectly remember. I had never taken notice of her before; and 'methought ſhe had, with a very agreeable perſon, an innocence and modeſty 'in her behaviour which I could not 'tell how to reconcile with the character 'of a laſcivious wanton. I reflected on 'what I had done; and reflection 'brought a number of ideas to my 'mind, that were by no means pleaſing. 'However, I had the honeſt ſatisfaction 'of thinking that I was not her corrupter; and this thought blunted the 'ſharpneſs of ſelf-reproach. I looked 'upon her ruin as almoſt irreparable; and 'painted to myſelf, in the ſtrongeſt colours, the unhappy ſituation of a girl 'abandoned to the indulgence of diſgraceful appetites, loſt to all ſenſe of 'real virtue and honour, and in the direct road to infamy and miſery. I 'pitied her, and reſolved to endeavour, 'at leaſt, to reclaim her. I found 'her one day alone; and, ſeizing the 'opportunity, I began a lecture on incontinency.'—'O hideous!' interrupted I; 'a pretty gentleman to preach 'to a girl on that ſubject!—the ſuppoſed partner in her guilt too! Why, I 'wonder how you could have the confidence to open your mouth about it. 'The moſt improper perſon!'—'No, 'my dear,' returned Lucius, with a ſmile, 'I muſt differ from you: for, 'ſuppoſing her the perſon, I can't help, 'even now, thinking myſelf the moſt 'proper man in the world. However, 'it was with much difficulty that I 'brought myſelf to form the reſolution, 'and with more ſtill that I put it in 'practice. I thought it my duty in 'a peculiar manner, and encouraged 'myſelf with the pleaſing proſpect of

'ſaving a very agreeable girl from ruin. 'But, when I had this opportunity, I 'knew not how to begin. I was 'aſhamed of appearing more virtuous 'than her, and reproaching her for 'an action, which ſhe, I imagined, 'thought I ought rather to thank her 'for. Theſe laſt reflections held me 'for ſome time ſilent; but, at laſt, I 'boldly began, with obſerving that a 'girl ſo agreeable in her perſon, and, 'to outward appearance, ſo modeſt and 'prudent, ſeemed formed by nature for 'happineſs: and that it was a pity, 'that, with ſo many perfections, ſhe 'ſhould deſtroy all her hopes of enjoy-'ing the pleaſures of an innocent love, 'all her proſpects of a happy marriage; 'loſe the eternal rewards of heaven, 'and inconſiderately plunge herſelf in 'ruin and infamy. She interrupted me, 'by telling me, ſhe was ſurprized to 'hear me talk in this manner, and 'wondered what I would be at. I then 'began to tell her that I was a partner 'in her guilt; and that, though I had 'not the reſolution to withſtand the 'temptation, yet my conſcience re-'proached me for what I had done, and 'I repented of my folly. "Let me per-"ſuade you," ſaid I. She ſtared—ſhe 'believed I was mad—ſhe flew out of 'the room, and I—looked like a fool.

'I believe ſo,' replied I, burſting into a laugh. 'Poor girl! I pity her. I only 'wiſh Prudilla had overheard you. But, 'I hope the natural innocence of her be-'haviour cured this groundleſs ſuſpi-'cion.'—'In a great meaſure it did,' re-turned he; 'notwithſtanding it was rea-'ſonable to ſuppoſe that a girl, who took 'ſuch precaution as to come and go away 'in the dark, and who, all the time ſhe 'was with me, never ſpoke louder than 'a whiſper, would ſtrenuouſly deny a 'fact which ſhe took ſuch pains to 'conceal: I was not, therefore, per-'fectly ſatisfied.—But I can't help 'thinking, now I know her innocent, 'in how ridiculous a light I muſt then 'appear to her. Two or three months 'after, I lay there again; I took the 'precaution to lock my door, but I had 'not been an hour in bed, when I met 'with the ſame temptation, which, in 'ſpite of all my previous reſolutions, 'again proved too ſtrong for me. Thus, 'perfectly convinced of my own weak-'neſs, I reſolved never to lie another 'night in the ſame houſe. But, when-'ever I went there, I took particular 'notice of the young woman's com-'plexion, as well as of her ſhape: and 'in ſix or eight months time, obſerving 'no marks of her pregnancy, I grew 'perfectly eaſy with reſpect to her, and 'began to blame myſelf for my unjuſt 'ſuſpicions, though I was ſtill at a loſs 'where to fix them. Indeed, my dear,' continued he, 'I can't help thinking 'Prudilla committed a greater crime, in 'thus endeavouring to ruin the reputa-'tion of a modeſt girl, by loading her 'with all the infamy of her own guilt, 'than in the very actions that gave oc-'caſion to it. How depraved muſt have 'been her mind! How loſt to every ge-'nerous and humane ſentiment!—But 'tis happy for her, that ſhe has had 'time to correct the irregularities of 'her paſſions. Cenſorioufneſs, inhu-'manity, and the indulgence of every 'ſelfiſh paſſion, are the natural conſe-'quences of her ſentiments of reli-'gion; a religion, which, reſpecting 'only God, regards every duty to man 'as low and contemptible: but ſo 'deeply are the kind affections imprint-'on the heart; ſo lovely does virtue, 'humanity, and generoſity, appear to 'all mankind; that, however the minds 'of individuals are warped by ſelfiſh 'views, they cannot help ſecretly ap-'proving this temper in others: and 'even thoſe of her ſentiments, how-'ever contemptibly they ſpeak of it, ge-'nerally ſhew by their actions, that 'they have the ſame obligations to na-'ture, the ſame impulſes to goodneſs, 'with the reſt of mankind: ſo that, 'however pernicious their religious ſen-'timents may appear, with reſpect to 'their tendency, it very rarely happens 'that they have really ſuch unhappy, 'ſuch horrid effects.'

But I will trouble you no longer, Madam, with the repetition of a converſation which begins to grow but little intereſting. You will, I fancy, readily believe, that I am now ſufficiently weary; for this is as true as that I am your ladyſhip's conſtant friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXVII.

YOU find, Madam, by my two laſt letters, that I am arrived at the unexpected honour of being a ſtep-mother:

mother: but whether I ſhall behave in ſuch a manner as to ſupport my new dignity with any degree of applauſe to myſelf, is a circumſtance that I cannot yet be ſure of. However, of this I am certain, that I was never in my life half ſo angry as I am now, at our writers of plays, novels, and romances, for continually drawing a ſtep-mother as a monſter in nature; and ſo terrible a creature, that one would be apt to conceive that ſhe had not one feature that in the leaſt reſembled any part of a human being. And, indeed, in all my reading, which, in this way, has been pretty extenſive, I can hardly recollect above one or two inſtances in which this inexorable tyrant had the leaſt advantage above a tiger, a wolf, or a crocodile. That a bad woman ſhould make a bad wife, and a worſe ſtep-mother, is not to be wondered at; eſpecially, if covetouſneſs, pride, ill-nature, and an extraordinary fondneſs for her own children, center in the ſame breaſt. But while there are ſuch perſons in the world as your ever-honoured aunt, you muſt be convinced, that an empty name can never change the diſpoſition of the heart, and turn the moſt mild, the tendereſt and moſt generous minds, into ſavage cruelty. By her example, Madam, I intend to regulate my conduct; and while I ſtrive to imitate ſo fine a model, I muſt be a wretched copyiſt indeed, if I myſelf am not tolerably perfect.

Lucius ſeems extremely pleaſed at my manner of treating him; and a thouſand times has he already thanked me, by his looks, and the moſt engaging expreſſions of tenderneſs. Two days after this day of wonders, we went to pay another viſit to Prudilla. I was deſirous of ſeeing the child; and eaſily imagined, that though Lucius was perfectly ſilent on this head, he could not avoid being much more ſo, though his fear of offending me might make him conceal it. As Mr. Stevens had torn the paper which contained a detail of his ſiſter's guilt, we had loſt the direction where to find the little creature, whom I now began to conſider as one of the family. I, therefore, the evening before, propoſed his ſending a ſervant, with a letter, to give them notice when we intended to ſee them, and to deſire that the infant might be brought to their houſe. Lucius readily embraced this propoſal, and with a look that ſeemed to ſpeak much more than he expreſſed, ſeized hold of my hand, and thanked me for the care I took to anticipate his deſires.

The next morning we ſet out pretty early; and, upon our arrival, Mr. Stevens, handing me out of the coach, conducted us in, when he muſt needs ſalute me, under the character of his ſiſter; 'not in law,' ſaid he, 'but againſt law; 'however, you are my ſiſter, and you 'ſhall be my ſiſter. I hope,' added he, 'you have heartily forgiven the penitent above ſtairs; if you have, you 'muſt let us ſee it, by taking care of 'her child: and, by this means, you 'will greatly oblige, not only me, your 'brother, and the bantling's uncle and 'guardian, but our good friend my 'young philoſopher there, the baby's 'papa, whom, let me tell you, it is your 'duty to oblige.'

'O, Sir,' ſaid I, 'I will not diſpute 'with you about a name. If you can 'prove that you are any way related to 'me, I ſhall certainly eſteem it an ho'nour. As to the child, I can make 'no promiſes, I aſſure you: I can 'only ſay, that I will do my endea'vour at leaſt; and, though not from 'dull duty, I ſhall, from affection, a 'much more engaging motive, ſtrive to 'contribute to the ſatisfaction of one 'who is nearer than a brother.'

'You are very good, Madam,' replied he, ſmiling; 'but as to the honour 'of being related to me, (in this man'ner I mean) I muſt confeſs that it is 'but very little. The poor brat, it 'muſt be acknowledged, is baſe-born; 'and, therefore, you are no more it's 'mother-in-law, than I am your bro'ther-in-law I mean, by the law of 'the land. By the laws of nature 'and reaſon, indeed, you are much 'more nearly related; for, as the 'gentleman's wife, you are as much 'the mother of this child as if it had 'been born in marriage; for his mar'riage with my ſiſter would not make 'the child more his than it is at preſent, 'and, conſequently, your duty is, in 'both caſes, the ſame.'

'I am quite of your mind, Sir,' ſaid I: 'but where is this little creature? 'methinks I long to be acquainted 'with my new charge.'—'We ſhall 'have the young ſlut here by and by,' replied he; and then added gravely, 'But what is the matter with Lucius? 'See how thoughtful he looks! Why,

'I profeſs he has all the father in his 'face—it is written on his forehead. 'He has one child now, which, three 'days ago, I dare ſay he never ſo much as 'dreamed of, and, if I gueſs right, in 'three months or ſo, he will have ano-'ther. Is it not true, Madam? No 'wonder then, that he has the look of 'a patriarch. But, I hope, he has not 'loſt his ſpeech?'

'No, no, Sir,' ſaid Lucius, with a ſmile; 'I have been liſtening very at-'tentively to you, and at the ſame 'time admiring the goodneſs of a lady 'that derives freſh charms from my guilt 'and folly.'—'Nay, nay,' cried he, 'there 'is no wonder that you ſhould not find 'an opportunity to put in a ſingle word, 'when a talkative old fellow, and a 'very fine lady, ſeem reſolved to have 'all the diſcourſe to themſelves: when 'this is the caſe, you are too wiſe not 'to know, that the moſt complaiſant 'thing the huſband can do, is not to 'interrupt them. But is ſhe ſo very 'good? Why then, I ſuppoſe, you have 'not had ſo much as a curtain-lecture 'upon this affair!'—'Far from it, I aſſure 'you,' replied Lucius. 'Then ſhe is a 'dear, ſweet little angel,' cried the old man; 'aye, and a goddeſs too; and—an '—an—I don't know what to call her; 'I can't think of a name half good 'enough. I could almoſt find in my 'heart to raviſh a kiſs from her for it; 'only I am afraid, that it will be a 'little unreaſonable, that both ſhould 'ſuffer a rape from our family. Let me 'tell you, Madam, that you are hap-'py in having an opportunity to ſhew 'a greatneſs of mind, that muſt for 'ever endear you to a man of ſenſe. 'But whatever you are in reality, you 'are not to appear to the world in the 'character of a ſtep-mother; the infant 'muſt be brought up as the child of a 'deceaſed friend, relation, or ſo; or, if 'Lucius will conſent to it, let her be 'put under the care of his mother and 'Marilla. This, Madam, will eaſe 'you of a conſiderable part of the care 'of your office, and, at the ſame time, 'you will have an opportunity of ſeeing 'her as often as you pleaſe.'

Lucius readily approved of this mo-tion; and I as readily agreeing to it, it was reſolved that Sophronia, Lucius's mother, ſhould be informed, by Mr. Stevens, of the whole affair. This be-ing immediately determined, he reſum-ed, 'There are many advantages which 'will attend your concealing the truth 'from the world, beſides the ſingle con-'ſideration of the reputation of the two 'families. You would, in ſome ſenſe, 'be regarded by the world as a ſtep-'mother: and though they would, 'doubtleſs, be ready to make ſome al-'lowance, in conſideration of the ſlut's 'being baſe-born; yet the very name 'itſelf is generally here, in the country, 'the cauſe of diſcontent, and frequent 'uneaſineſs. It is an unthankful office. 'Every body takes pains to render her 'ſuſpected by the little brats; they, 'without thought, are induſtrious to 'weaken her authority, by ſowing, in 'their unthinking minds, the ſeeds of 'jealouſy, diſtruſt, and a ſpirit of con-'tradiction. And, let her be ever ſo 'good, let her have ever ſuch an affec-'tion for the children, the ſlighteſt cor-'rection, the moſt gentle reproof, is 'aggravated into the moſt inſupportable 'tyranny; every old woman in the pa-'riſh bemoans their hard fate; and, let 'the urchins be guilty of ever ſo great 'a crime, they can't whimper, but the 'ſimple, well-meaning neighbours, cry 'out—"Ah, poor ſouls! if their own "mother was alive, they would not be "ſerved ſo." The children eaſily 'imbibe theſe bad influences, and are 'inadvertently taught to hate a perſon 'who, perhaps, ſtrives to love them; 'a woman who, from the time of her 'marriage, filled with a juſt ſenſe of 'her duty, may have reſolved to do 'them all the juſtice in her power, and 'to treat them with all poſſible lenity. 'Her caſe is very hard: all her endea-'vours to pleaſe are fruitleſs; a bad 'conſtruction is put upon her kindeſt 'actions; ſhe ſtrives in vain; is un-'thanked; and, perhaps, repaid with 'ingratitude. And this, Madam, I 'have ſometimes known to be the 'caſe of by far the beſt woman in the 'neighbourhood.'

'Really, Sir,' ſaid I, 'you give a 'very ſhocking account of the uncom-'fortable ſtate of being a mother-in-'law; enough to frighten any woman 'from the thoughts of marrying a man 'who has children: but, however, if ſhe 'has the goodneſs to perſevere in her

'kindneſs,

'kindneſs, ſhe muſt ſurely win them over 'at laſt; their prejudices muſt vaniſh; and, 'if Mr. Prior's remark be true, that—

"Malice vanquiſh'd, heightens virtue's "praiſe,"—

'ſhe will then have the ſatisfaction of a 'glorious revenge. Having made this 'noble conqueſt, ſhe will force them to 'do juſtice to her merit, and, in ſpite of 'themſelves, to give her their love, their 'eſteem, and their gratitude. What 'are all the ſubmiſſions in the world to 'this? To ſee their cheeks glow with 'affection, at the ſame time that they, 'with an honeſt bluſh, own their error; 'this is not only heaping coals of fire on 'their heads, but on their hearts too.'

'This is very true,' ſaid Lucius, ſmiling, and giving me a look of approbation; 'but few tempers can hold 'out againſt ill treatment. Ingratitude 'may ſometimes ſour the beſt minds; it 'too eaſily prompts them to make a return in kind: and, when this is the 'caſe, both the lady and the children 'are worthy of pity.'

We now went up ſtairs, where we found Prudilla in a much weaker condition than when we were here before: but we had hardly taken our ſeats, when we heard Mr. Stevens talking to a woman at the chamber-door; and having deſired her to ſtep down into the pantry to refreſh herſelf, came in with a child in his arms. Lucius and I aroſe: our eyes were fixed on the infant; which, ſmiling, held out it's little arms to me: but Mr. Stevens, not obſerving this, carried it to Prudilla; who, giving a deep ſigh, and looking upon it with eyes ſwimming with affection, deſired to kiſs it: but the child turned away; and, perhaps, frighted at her ghaſtly appearance, ſtill ſtruggled to come at me; which ſhe immediately did, the moment ſhe was ſet down at her mamma's knee.

This little incident, trifling as it was, gave me a good deal of pleaſure. I ſat down; and placing her on my lap, gave her a kiſs: ſhe fondled me; and, with an innocent ſmile, ſtroked my face for half a minute, ſaying—'Ah, poor!' then giggled, and hid her pretty hand in my boſom. I could not help being fond of the dear creature. I kiſſed her ſeveral times, without even knowing why I did it: it was giving way to an impulſe which I could not reſiſt. I conſidered her as a part of my dear Lucius; I endeavoured to trace in her face ſome of his well-known features. I caſt my eyes on him, that I might be able to form a more accurate judgment of the reſemblance; when I could not help obſerving that, with a look of peculiar pleaſure, he ſeemed to watch all my actions, while, at the ſame time, his countenance was overſpread with a ſoftneſs that methought expreſſed a paternal affection working in his heart. While I was thus engaged in endeavouring to trace out, and, by the help of fancy, to prove a likeneſs between the lineaments of a face that was placed before me, and thoſe in miniature placed near my boſom, my glances frequently met his; and the ſatisfaction and delight that appeared in them, gave an additional applauſe to that which aroſe from the indulgence of theſe fooleries. Lucius, notwithſtanding this viſible ſatisfaction, ſtill continued ſilent, and ſeemed at a loſs how to behave, though ſo many expreſſions of my tenderneſs might well be ſuppoſed to authorize him; and I was juſt going to chide him for it, when Prudilla, with a ſigh, cried, in a very peeviſh and jealous tone, that ſhe thought it very hard that ſhe might not have the pleaſure of kiſſing her own child; that ſhe ſaw plainly I ſhould ſpoil it; and that it was an odd way of ſhewing my kindneſs, to take her from a perſon that muſt be ſuppoſed to love her better than I or any body elſe could do. Lucius coloured, and, giving her a look of indignation, was going to ſpeak, when Mr. Stevens began; for he being let into the important ſecret, was now ſuffered to continue in the room. 'What do you 'mean, ſiſter?' ſaid he, in a haſty, ſevere manner; 'would you not have the lady 'love the child? If you are ſo jealous 'that nobody muſt be fond of her but 'yourſelf, e'en take her with you. A 'good mother would think herſelf very 'happy in leaving it to the care of a 'perſon who is diſpoſed to be fond of it.' —'A good mother!' returned ſhe, crying: 'you are always reproaching me 'with my guilt; why muſt I be told 'of it? why muſt I be upbraided with 'being a mother? But yet it is too 'true—to my ſhame it is. Would to 'God I had never been a mother! 'Would to God I had never deſerved to 'be a mother!'—'See there now,' cried Mr. Stevens; 'I proteſt there is no ſuch 'thing

'thing as ſpeaking to her. I reproach 'you!—Well, but it's no matter.' And then addreſſing himſelf to me—'Dear 'Madam,' ſaid he, 'excuſe this treat-'ment. My ſiſter's illneſs makes her 'ſo peeviſh, that ſhe hardly knows what 'ſhe ſays. Be ſo good as to let me take 'the child.'

Lucius and I ſtared; and it was not without ſome ſtruggles that I ſtifled my reſentment. I was two or three times going to break out, and to interrupt them; and had I followed the firſt dictates of my paſſion, ſo much was I provoked at her manner of ſpeaking, that I ſhould have diſowned all my tenderneſs to the child, though my heart would have given the lye to my words, and have vented much more bitter reproaches than thoſe ſhe received from her brother; and, perhaps, in the heat of my reſentment, I might have told her that, to oblige her, I would readily diſclaim all relation to it. But a few moments reflection, and the ſight of Lucius, made me reſolve to ſpeak in a different manner; and Mr. Stevens's good-natured apology, not to ſpeak at all. Could I, Madam, have ſaid any thing that would have diſpleaſed Lucius more? Could I have behaved in a manner more contrary to the ſettled diſpoſition of my mind? Yet paſſion would have done what my reaſon would for ever have diſallowed. Mr. Stevens took the child, who clung to me, and, giving me a beſeeching look, cried at parting. He ſtepped with her to his ſiſter; and ſetting her on one of the arms of the chair, ſhe had juſt ſtrength enough to keep her from falling. She kiſſed her two or three times; but had hardly had her a minute, when ſaying that her crying diſtracted her head, ſhe deſired that ſomebody would take the naughty girl from her. Lucius ſeized her in his arms; and, firſt ſeeming to obſerve my looks, hugged her to his boſom, kiſſed her with the affection of a tender parent, and then brought her to me, and deſired her to kiſs me, which ſhe readily did. He ſmiled; and being apprehenſive that Prudilla's ill temper might again ſhew itſelf, wiſhed her better, and we both took our leave, Mr. Stevens calling for the nurſe to take the child. While we were at dinner, Mr. Stevens renewed his apologies; and at the ſame time told me, that he had been ſo provoked at ſeeing my goodneſs, as he called it, ſo ungratefully returned, that, notwithſtanding his ſiſter's illneſs, he had much ado to behave towards her with any degree of decency. And on this ſcore, too, Lucius vindicated his ſilence; alledging, that if he had once begun to reproach her, his heat of temper would, in all probability, have made him treat her in ſuch a manner as might have been attended with very ill conſequences with reſpect to her. I was not, I confeſs, entirely ſatisfied with this reaſon; I was inſulted on his account, and had been ſhocked with reproaches in the midſt of a glow of tenderneſs, and while I was giving a high teſtimony of my affection to him, and engaged in an employment which my affronted pride made me almoſt look upon as an act of ſupererogation. However, I ſeemed to admit of his excuſe; and, as I made no reply, but took pains to curb and conceal the remains of my ill temper, which had now pretty well ſubſided, he ſeemed to think me perfectly ſatisfied with it.

You ſee, Madam, that I can be out of humour without cauſe. Lucius was certainly in the right; for how barbarous would it have been in him to have retaliated an affront on a woman on the very verge of life, merely for a weakneſs and peeviſh fretfulneſs, which her illneſs, added to her uneaſy reflections, might well excuſe! And had the conſequences been what he had juſt reaſon to dread, I am ſure he would never have forgiven himſelf.

Our converſation, Madam, for the reſt of the day, was ſo little intereſting, that I ſhall not trouble either you or myſelf with a repetition of it. And, indeed, I have already given you trifles enough to make you think this a moſt trifling letter. My mind was, however, in a moſt delightful ſituation all the afternoon, and particularly when we took our leave; and the engaging manner in which Lucius made his acknowledgments upon our return home in the coach, ſtrengthened and confirmed every delightful ſenſation. 'My dear Felicia,' ſaid he, taking hold of my hand, and giving me a look expreſſive of every thing that can be called tender and generous; 'how 'kind, how obliging, is your whole be-'haviour! How agreeable is my ſur-'prize, to find nothing but the deareſt 'proofs of affection where I expected to 'meet with reproach; and to ſee you ge-'neroufly overlook a crime which would 'raiſe the indignation of almoſt every

'other

'other woman! To ſee you careſs a 'child which is not your own! A child 'that is—— But I can't find words to 'expreſs half my meaning. Is all my 'tenderneſs too little for you, that you 'muſt thus endeavour to encreaſe it 'with the moſt ſenſible obligations, and 'to add to love the higheſt admiration 'and gratitude?'—'How much are you 'miſtaken!' cried I, laughing. 'What 'will you ſay, if I tell you that I know 'many ladies, and, I believe, ſome of 'ſtrict virtue too, who have adopted it 'as a maxim, that "a reformed rake "makes the beſt huſband?" This is 'really a moſt ridiculous, as well as in-'decent aſſertion; and, whenever it is 'tried, a moſt dangerous experiment: 'but as vanity makes them always flat-'ter themſelves that their charms are ca-'pable of producing this wonderful re-'formation, they are hardly ever afraid 'of marrying, even the moſt abandoned 'libertine, though ſunk a thouſand de-'grees below the dignity of a man. Pray 'what would theſe people ſay to a fault 'which muſt appear extremely ſmall 'when compared to years ſpent in the 'diabolical employment of ruining in-'nocence, and in all the cruel infernal 'arts of falſhood, deceit, and trea-'chery?'—'I am ſurprized, my dear,' ſaid Lucius, 'that ladies who have 'adopted ſuch a pernicious opinion, 'ſhould have ſo little prudence as to 'make it publick. Have they no ſenſe 'of modeſty? Can they be inſenſible 'that people will be apt to charge them 'with being influenced by deſires that 'prompt them only to approve a man 'who has given before-hand convincing 'teſtimonies of his ability to gratify 'them; and that, for a certainty of this, 'they will ſacrifice every other conſi-'deration, and prefer him who has 'proved himſelf a villain? You know, 'my dear, it is not ſuch as theſe I 'meant. I would not do you the in-'jury to mention your name with theirs, 'nor am I ſolicitous about the diſlike or 'approbation of ſuch as theſe; but that 'you ſhould thus generouſly hide my 'faults, how can I ſufficiently thank 'you! That you, who are modeſty it-'ſelf, a friend to every virtue, ſhould, 'inſtead of upbraidings, laviſh your 'tenderneſs, and, with all the blan-'diſhments of love, careſs an infant 'that——' 'Hold, hold, my dear,' cried I, laughing; 'a truce to your flat-'tery, I beſeech you. Pray, how long 'have we been married? Above nine 'months, I believe. It is high time, 'ſure, to have done with compliments. 'Why, we ought to have had twice as 'many quarrels; and, to follow the 'mode, we ſhould, before this time, have 'begun heartily to hate each other. But 'to be ſerious,' added I, with a gravity much more ſuitable to the preſent diſpo-ſition of my mind than this flight, which, however lively, was all affectation; 'to 'what purpoſe ſhould I torture you, by 'reproaching you with a fault long ſince 'paſſed? Can I give you pain without 'feeling it myſelf? Since none of us 'are perfect, ought I not rather to re-'joice that you have ſo few faults, and 'ſo many virtues to counterbalance 'them? I am very ſenſible, that ſhould 'a young woman, with the ſame temp-'tation, ſo readily forfeit her honour, 'ſhe would be entirely inexcuſable, and 'her crime would admit of but little 'alleviation. I am ſenſible, too, that 'though ſhe would ſuffer the greateſt 'infamy by becoming a mother, your 'crime, in the eye of Heaven, may be 'as great as hers; yet the world, that 'would condemn her, will excuſe you. 'And ſhall I be more obdurate, and 'leſs ready to forgive, than a ſtranger? 'I, who have improved by your exam-'ple, and who owe to you a vaſt acqui-'ſition in knowledge, and in many ſu-'blimely delicate ſenſations? It was 'you who firſt taught me to converſe 'with myſelf, to know the pleaſures of 'reflection, and all the delight that ac-'companies heavenly gratitude and love. 'With all theſe obligations, have I rea-'ſon to complain that you are a man, 'and not an angel? Though you have 'been frail, your mind is ſtill untainted. 'I have not the leaſt fear of your infi-'delity to me. It is my duty, it is my 'intereſt, to make you happy; and I 'hope it will always be, as it is now, 'my higheſt pleaſure. O Lucius! where 'could I have found a huſband like you? 'for, as Hamlet ſays of his father, "Take you for all in all, I ne'er ſhall "look upon your like again."

Lucius embraced me; but told me he might, with far greater juſtice, retort the charge of flattery upon me. He con-feſſed that he had many imperfections, and the moſt tender and obliging things were ſaid on both ſides; but I have now neither the leiſure nor inclination to re-

peat

peat them. May every refined delight be yours; and may your ladyſhip ever be as happy as is, at preſent, your ſincereſt friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXVIII.

I Am very glad, Madam, to find that both you and your aunt approve my conduct: but if you make my letters ſo publick as to ſhew them your friends, you will oblige me, in ſpite of my own inclinations, to write with more reſerve. The account of the diſpute between her and you, on the propriety of Lucius's reproving a young woman whom he thought a partner in his guilt, is very diverting; but I am more pleaſed to find that confidence and unreſerve with which I have related certain events, and which I was not altogether ſatisfied with, ſufficiently juſtified by her obſervations. It is with inexpreſſible delight I hear her ſay—That the ingenuity of mind which could prompt him to undertake ſo irkſome a taſk, and the modeſt diffidence that accompanied his behaviour to me, ſo oppoſite to the bold confidence of a man who would rather glory in his guilt, place him in ſo fair a view, as to make him, in her opinion, more amiable than if he had wanted this ſhade to heighten the lights which form the portrait I have given of his character.—

After this compliment to Lucius, would not any one imagine that I was a tolerable painter? She talks of lights and ſhades mutually ſetting off each other; and what elſe is neceſſary to compleat the picture? How unreaſonable is it in her, to inſiſt upon your deſiring me to preſent her with a more finiſhed piece, and to give the portrait of his mind in one view! But you muſt be obeyed. And yet how difficult is the taſk! Where ſhall I begin? He has all thoſe endearing impreſſions of humanity, thoſe native traces of goodneſs, which the mind approves upon the firſt view. His virtue coſts him little or no pains, it ſprings freely from his ſoul; while the eaſy ſweetneſs with which it is accompanied, lets every one ſee that it is attended with all the pleaſures of ſelf-gratification: it is the reſult of a refined taſte, a correct imagination, and a ſettled judgment. From hence his beneficence derives it's virtue, as well as it's ſource, and not from a conſideration of the pleaſure that accompanies it. In ſhort, he has a mind ſo noble, ſo diſintereſtedly and freely virtuous, that a perſon who would repreſent virtue at a continual war with ourſelves, would ſcarcely allow him to have any virtue at all. Nay, if there be any foundation for the opinion of thoſe gentlemen who place the perfection of a virtuous action in the oppoſition it meets with from nature, he is abſolutely incapable of performing one, either generous in itſelf, or acceptable to his God. If this commonly received opinion be true, it will prove that no one, who has not firſt been a compleat villain, can poſſibly attain to the ſublime character of a good man; that he who fluctuates between the rage of appetite on the one hand, and his duty on the other, is the faireſt character upon earth; and that a man of regular deſires, a man of ſtrict honour, acting from the moſt generous motives, is the moſt unhappy creature living; ſince his virtues, becoming by practice in a manner conſtitutional, muſt loſe all their value, and conſequently their reward. But let it be conſidered, that the *ſtrength* of every vicious propenſity is only the *weakneſs* of the oppoſite virtue; that a reluctance to an act of humanity can only proceed from the hardneſs of a heart petrified by a criminal ſelfiſhneſs; and that the very ſuſpence between virtue and vice tarniſhes the virtue, though it ſhould become victorious. Can that be an imperfection in man which is the glory of all the higher orders of created beings, and even of the great Creator himſelf? For, as a moſt ingenious author ſays—'If compulſion be the eſſence 'of virtue, the conduct of even the Su'preme Being has much leſs merit in it 'than the moſt diſingenuous of his crea'tures: for, to practiſe virtue, the *high'eſt* degrees of virtue, without *conſtraint*; 'to purſue it upon a principle of free 'choice, for the mere pleaſure and ap'probation of the thing itſelf, as his 'glory and his happineſs; is what con'ſtitutes our idea of the divine perfec'tion: and ſhall the ſame thing, which 'gives ſuch a ſuperlative grace and luſtre 'to the divine character, caſt a ſhade 'upon the human? So that, after all, 'conſtraint and ſelf-denial are ſo far 'from being *neceſſary* to virtue, that it

'is

'is mere *weakneſs*, and want of virtue, 'that gives them either uſe or expedi-'ency*.'

Thus, Madam, I have been at the pains of embelliſhing my letter, and ſetting off my own reflections, with a long quotation, to contradict a favourite opinion of your aunt's, and to prove that my dear Lucius may be a good man without having a violent inclination to be a bad one. There are inſtances, it is true, in which virtue is attended with ſome degree of ſelf-denial; and this would, doubtleſs, have been the caſe of Lucius, had he had virtue to refuſe the proffered favours of the unknown Prudilla: but, however difficult the conqueſt is at firſt, a ſteady adherence removes every obſtacle; the temptation ariſing from future attacks becomes leſs and leſs as the mind becomes more perfect; perſeverance treads down the briars, and makes the path plain, eaſy, and delightful; unnumbered beauties open to our view, and the rugged road becomes the lawn of pleaſure; the mind is at leiſure calmly to contemplate the divine landſcape that lies before it, to enjoy the fragrant breeze, to taſte the charms of conſcious innocence budding with golden fruit; and, above all, with rapture to behold the ſmiles of Heaven, beaming celeſtial light and divine complacency.

But whither am I rambling? It is time to trace back my ſteps, and, like a good wife, to return to my huſband; and, as I flatter myſelf that I have done him juſtice, I will proceed with his character, which will be beſt illuſtrated by his conduct. His uſual employment is in giving joy to a number of grateful dependants; and ſometimes Marilla and I have the ſatisfaction of joining with him in little acts of beneficence and compaſſion. When there are immediate objects of diſtreſs before him, how readily does his ſenſible heart catch their ſorrows! how ſpeedily does he anticipate their wiſhes, and turn their grief into admiration and joy! while his affability and condeſcenſion give an irreſiſtible grace to his benefits. But not contented with doing good, when forcibly touched by objects of pity, he endeavours to prevent the leaſt approach of unhappineſs and miſery, and provides againſt the poor's aſking for relief, by placing them above the want of it.

With regard to this his principal view, he has laid a plan for making conſiderable alterations in the garden. To ſerve the poor, he has already levelled giants* with the ground, demoliſhed enchanted caſtles, and will ſhortly, by an arrangement of more natural beauties, utterly baniſh the *phantaſtical*; which, like the Chineſe paintings, can only pleaſe by ſhewing a kind of reſemblance of nature in the moſt whimſical and natural proportions. The choiceſt flowers, inſtead of being depoſited in knots, are to be careleſsly ſtrewed amongſt the ſhort graſs; and being mingled with every ſpecies that adorn the fields, will, in the moſt beautiful manner, brocade the velvet carpet; while the tulip, auricula, and carnation, and all thoſe whoſe riſing ſtalks would render them liable to be broken by the undiſtinguiſhing foot or the roller, are to retire to the margin of our walks, and ſkulking cloſe, to ſeek protection from the nicely-cut verdant walls and obeliſks that are ſtill to retain their form. We are to have, in one part, groves and viſtos of evergreens; while, in another, the vine, the honeyſuckle, and the ivy, are to entwine the barren trunks, and mingle with the branches, of a row of elms that extend acroſs the extremity of the garden, but which, at every walk, leave an opening to let in a view of the neighbouring country. Thus, in thoſe ſeaſons when the rain or the froſt withholds ſubſiſtence from the families of our poor tenants, we ſhall always find them employment till they can return again to their uſual labours. By this means our moſt agreeable accommodations will become of extenſive benefit, and our very amuſements accompanied with thoſe pleaſing ſenſations which reſult from a calm, undiſturbed benevolence.

The man who has perſonal merit, may ſafely depend on being treated by Lucius with the utmoſt reſpect, though his circumſtances are ever ſo low; for his poverty, ſo far from being a reproach, ſeems, in his opinion, to entitle him to a ſuperior kind of deference. He relieves them with an air that ſhews he is only paying a debt due to humanity; and ſo cautious is he of giving a ſhock to

* See Philemon to Hydaſpes, the ſecond converſation upon falſe religion.
† See Letter XXVIII.

his ſenſibility, that he has the look rather of a perſon obliged, than of one conferring an obligation. For the relief of diſtreſſed merit he denies himſelf many of the elegancies of life, and particularly thoſe of the table, from which every coſtly, luxurious ſuperfluity is baniſhed. The meanneſs of a man's natural abilities never inſpires him with contempt; if his heart be good, it is all that he requires. Though he cannot give him the eſteem due to a friend, he is, in his opinion, a much more amiable character than the man that wants humanity, though poſſeſſed of every other qualification that can entitle him to reſpect; and indeed, without this, fine ſenſe, the moſt brilliant wit, the moſt profound erudition, added to the glare of wealth and high birth, can extort no more from him than a ſtiff, formal civility. He is, in one word, an enemy to nothing but vice and affectation; but he can ridicule the latter, and yet give the perſon a ſhare of his eſteem. His converſation, indeed, wants that briſk gaiety and ſprightlineſs of fancy, and all the light and airy ſallies of imagination, which we comprehend under the term *wit*; and as to repartee, he ſeldom indulges it. He has but little taſte for theſe ſparkling advantages in others; he regards them in too mean a light, and therefore is not ſufficiently ſenſible how much theſe natural accompliſhments give a brilliancy to converſation. When he talks, his ſtrong ſenſe is enlivened by a happy turn, a natural elegance of expreſſion; and his language, like his ſentiments, is not only juſt, but ſublime. Yet gravity is not always agreeable, and there are moments when folly becomes pleaſing, and we find a delight in being ridiculous: from hence wit derives it's moſt pleaſing charms; for with too much wiſdom we are ſometimes apt to mope into dulneſs. But this is a caſe that rarely happens with him, though ſometimes it does with me. His ſpirits flow with a ſmooth and even ſtream; whilſt I, having ſometimes airy flights, am ſubject to ſink into a dulneſs which folly and impertinence are beſt adapted to relieve.

You need not be told, Madam, that this is partly my caſe at preſent; the heavineſs of my expreſſions, towards the concluſion of what I have written, ſufficiently indicates that of my mind. I have loſt myſelf in drawing a character every way ſo dear to me, in deſcribing a man whoſe ſoul is the ſoul of friendſhip; no wonder then that my ſpirits flag. But, after all, your ladyſhip will perhaps think, that my affection carries me too far; and that while I am painting the *huſband*, I am only diſcovering the fondneſs of the *wife*. I will therefore, in pity to you, as well as myſelf, finiſh this pleaſing, though difficult ſubject; and, to ſecure myſelf from the double charge of dulneſs and partiality, leave, at leaſt, half his virtues untold. With my ſincereſt compliments to your other ſelf, and your very good aunt, I am your ladyſhip's moſt obedient

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XXXIX.

DEAR MADAM,

I Can now inform you, that Mr. Stevens has been at Mr. Manly's, where he had an opportunity of an hour or two's converſation with Sophronia and Marilla; when, to their no ſmall ſurprize, under the ſeal of ſecrecy, he unfolded the whole affair relating to the child, and they readily agreed to take the pretty infant into their care. After this he went to my aunt's, where he found her ſon, who arrived the day before from his travels, and who was juſt returned from paying a viſit to Melliſont, and his ſiſter Amelia. As he was juſt ſetting out to ſee us, Mr. Stevens altered his intention of ſtaying there to dinner, and readily agreed to accompany him. Accordingly they arrived, attended by a very ſmart young gentleman, who had commenced an acquaintance with my couſin while they were abroad, from the ſingle conſideration of their being countrymen: they therefore returned together; and as his friends lived in Yorkſhire, he made my aunt's in his way home, and, at my couſin's requeſt, conſented to ſtay with him two or three days, to reſt and refreſh himſelf on his journey.

Lucius received them all with great reſpect, though Mr. Stevens was, I believe, the moſt welcome viſitor. The gentleman, who was an abſolute ſtranger to every body preſent except my couſin, made an agreeable appearance; he had an eaſy flow of words, and an animated expreſſion; but his converſation was that of a profeſſed

professed libertine. He swore very fluently, and endeavoured to divert us with a recapitulation of several of his adventures in France and Italy. My cousin had so much less of the gentleman in his behaviour, as he had more affectation; and indeed he had acquired nothing by his travels that I could discover, but a low kind of knowledge, that he had better have been without, a greater stock of vanity and folly, and a knack of impertinently introducing a little French. And that his conversation might want nothing to render it disagreeable, he swore twice as much as his companion: for he had scarcely sat down, when taking a glass of wine, he cried, with a ridiculous, affected grin—'Sblood, Madam, you see that I have 'lost *rien* by my travels, and so, damme, '*a votres service*—Ha, ha, ha!—Why 'lookee, that is as much as to say, My 'service to ye.'

We had but once before the honour of entertaining such company; however, as this was the first time of our seeing my cousin after a long absence, and as the other was both his friend and an absolute stranger to us, good manners, or rather the custom of the world, would not suffer us to hazard the giving them an affront, by a reproof, which, however just in itself, would have been taken as a gross insult. Dinner was but just over, when we were agreeably surprized with a visit from a very worthy gentleman, the minister of the parish. But it was some time before we received any relief from his company: and indeed, though reproof was more suitable to his character than ours, I soon found that he also had too much of the same good-breeding to interrupt them. The stranger ran on with his intrigues, referring every minute to my cousin, to whom he always gave the name of his pocket-book, to know either the precise time of an event, or the name of the place where the important trifle was transacted; when the latter, to shew his exact punctuality, and to indulge, perhaps, a kind of vanity in displaying the strength of a memory wholly taken up with trifles, was sure to launch out into twenty particulars foreign to the question. He never forgot the name of the meanest village; and if he was asked what any town was called where they had dined, he not only readily replied, but added of his own accord the sign at the gate of the inn, what they had for dinner, whether the wine was good or bad, and some little adventure of his own, and this by way of episode; for when he had done, he always put the other in mind to go on again: '*But, damme, Jack!*—'*as you was a saying—allons—allons*,' constantly concluded whatever my wise cousin had to say. Thus they played into each other's hands, while we had nothing else to do but, like humble auditors, to listen to their impertinence.

The tea-table did not procure us any intermission; and finding the clergyman had no intention to interpose, I stept aside into the next room, desiring him to follow me; where I told him, that he would oblige me if he would take upon himself the trouble of giving them a gentle reproof; for I could not bear to hear them swear with such uncontrouled freedom. He promised that he would, and we returned to our chairs. We had hardly sat down, when my cousin gave him a very favourable opportunity; for accidentally spilling a little tea upon his legs, he began to curse, and stamp, and swear, like a madman; but no damage being done, he was presently easy, when the clergyman observed, in a very handsome manner, that he could not help being so unpolite as to think swearing a very poor accomplishment in a gentleman; that it was a vice that wanted even the colour of temptation to excuse it, having neither the allurements of pleasure nor profit. 'The predominance 'of this profane practice,' added he, 'frequently calls for the most earnest 'exhortations from the pulpit; and I 'lately preached a sermon on the subject, which I wish you had had the 'benefit of hearing.'

This reproof gave me a secret satisfaction; and I was going to second what he had said, when the stranger replied—'And pray, doctor, be so good as to 'tell us what success this performance 'of yours had? I hope in the Lord you 'made a pretty many converts, for 'to be sure nobody could withstand 'the force of your reasoning.' The reverend gentleman, I must confess, looked a little silly and disconcerted. My cousin laughed, and jogging Lucius with his elbow, and at the same time winking with one eye, cried, just loud enough to be heard by all the company, '*Du diable!* did you mind him, hay '—zoons, twig the parson.'—'Well,

 'well,

'well,' cried Lucius, ſmiling, 'I heard 'the ſermon the gentleman mentions; 'and, I aſſure you, it was a very good 'one. I take this opportunity, Sir, 'to thank you for it; but you muſt ex-'cuſe me if I am of a different opinion 'from you in this particular. Swear-'ing is certainly attended with both 'pleaſure and profit; and was I to 'preach a ſermon, it ſhould be to prove 'it.'

The ſtranger appeared quite at a loſs, and rubbing his forehead, I heard him mutter to himſelf—'I will be damn'd 'if I can tell what to make of this! 'Pleaſure and Profit! Old Sir Crape 'is in the right; but what the devil 'does the gentleman mean? After 'all it is a curſed fooliſh cuſtom.' My couſin, clapping Lucius on the back, ſeemed mightily delighted, without knowing why. Mr. Stevens was in a deep ſuſpenſe, and looked at Lucius with extreme attention; while I was perfectly aſtoniſhed. I had been expecting ſome grave and judicious remark; and did not doubt but that Lucius would advance ſomething new on the ſubject, that might, for the preſent at leaſt, put a ſtop to their profane impertinence; when I was all at once mortified to find that I had ſpoke to the reverend gentleman to little purpoſe, ſince he was reſolved to take their part, and to countenance what I knew his heart muſt condemn. 'Fie, fie, Sir!' cried the clergyman after a little heſitation, and with a tone and look that ſhewed him equally pleaſed and diſſatisfied, 'You joke, I am ſure 'you do. Make a ſermon in praiſe of 'ſwearing! God forbid! 'tis all a joke.' —'Indeed,' ſaid Lucius, 'I am in ear-'neſt. Don't you think I ſhould make 'ſome converts? It is a taking ſubject; 'quite new, I believe, Sir.'—'Phu, 'phu, Converts! Perverts!' cried the good gentleman, with ſome warmth; 'ave, converts for Satan indeed. Dear 'Sir, for Heaven's ſake don't talk in this 'manner.' My couſin was now all life; he ſeized Lucius's hand, crying—'Ay, 'do give us, do, *un ſermon ſur des ſer-'mens*. Ha, ha, ha! You ſee I am a 'wit. I'll be curſed if I don't liſten 'to you; faith! I will remember every 'word. Come, begin, commence.'—'No, no,' cried Lucius, 'why in ſuch 'haſte? I am not uſed to preaching, and 'therefore, as this will be my firſt per-'formance, a day or two's time is little 'enough to prepare myſelf.' If you will 'all give me the favour of your com-'pany the day after to-morrow, I will 'oblige you. Meanwhile, I muſt de-'ſire you, and this gentleman, your 'friend, to conſider the matter ſeri-'ouſly, and prepare yourſelves to anti-'cipate what I ſhall have to ſay; by 'this means you will juſtify this prac-'tice to your own minds, and whenever 'you are attacked in this manner again, 'be ready, with my aſſiſtance, to vin-'dicate yourſelves to the world, as well 'as your own conſciences. I would 'have every body act from principle; 'and therefore I muſt beg you to en-'deavour to ſuſpend the practice, only 'till you can recollect ſome good argu-'ments for it's vindication: this cannot 'ſurely be very long—a quarter of an 'hour, perhaps, may furniſh you with 'ſufficient motives; but if not, I would 'not have you be diſcouraged; there 'can be no great hurt in waiting till 'you hear my lecture, which, I dare 'promiſe you, will furniſh the ſtrongeſt 'and moſt convincing reaſons for your 'continuing the laudable practice. But 'you muſt permit me, gentlemen,' added he with a ſmile, 'as your advocate 'and friend, to inſiſt upon one condi-'tion, and that is, that I may be al-'lowed to ſwear the firſt oath, and give 'the firſt curſe.' The ſtranger immediately gave his conſent to this propoſition, which he acknowledged to be reaſonable enough; while my couſin, with a look of pleaſure, precipitately replied, (at the ſame time giving a ſtamp with his foot, and rubbing his hands) 'Damn it; and ſo you ſhall, *de tout mon 'cœur*, by——' 'Hold, hold,' cried Lucius; 'I appeal to the company, if 'this be uſing me well.'

Though we were at a loſs to know what he was driving at, we all gave our aſſent, and I propoſed that he ſhould ſuffer ſome penalty. The poor youth was ſelf-condemned, and ſcratching his head, begged pardon, telling us, it was not done with deſign: but Lucius was inexorable; he pulled out his watch, and propoſed, that he ſhould be obliged to be ſilent for five minutes; and this ſentence being approved, he added, to puniſh him farther, that he himſelf would not ſwear till he could find an opportunity of introducing an oath in ſuch a manner as to give a grace to the ſentence.

The

The tea-things had been taken away for ſome time, Mr. Stevens had lighted his pipe, and the watch was placed on the table before Lucius, which my couſin, during the time of his ſilence, continued to examine with the cloſeſt attention: mean while the clergyman expreſſed his ſurprize at Lucius's behaviour, and let us know, that he would not only hear him, but would ſit up all night to anſwer ſo wicked a ſermon; and he did not doubt but he ſhould be able to overturn all his arguments; and therefore invited the company to hear him the ſucceeding day at church, when he would let them ſee that a good cauſe could ſuffer nothing by being attacked; adding, that as he had truth and religion on his ſide, he did not doubt but he ſhould be enabled, through divine aſſiſtance, to convince, if not to reform, them. Lucius requeſted that he would hear him before he promiſed too much; and told him, that he himſelf, with all his zeal, might approve what he now condemned: however, he deſired him to wait with patience, and, if he was not convinced, he would certainly attend to hear his own arguments refuted. But the ſtranger was averſe to the propoſal of going to church; and my dumb couſin ſhewed his diſlike to the motion, by ſigns, till he had liberty to ſpeak; and then he loudly exclaimed againſt it.

The converſation was now more equally divided, and, at the ſame time, it was rendered leſs ſhocking; for whatever were Lucius's ſecret intentions, which we were yet unacquainted with, he had already, by ſiding with them, produced a more happy effect than would probably have attended all his remonſtrances. Our two travellers ſpoke ſlowly, and with abundance of precaution; and while we were all watching them, my couſin was watching Lucius, frequently interrupting him, to let him know that in ſuch a place he might handſomely introduce an oath; but Lucius had the advantage of conſtantly proving that it would flatten, or perplex, the ſenſe of the ſentence: when waiting about half an hour to no purpoſe, my couſin, and his friend, perhaps tired of this reſtraint, took their leave, and in the moſt obliging manner left us at liberty to indulge the pleaſure of a free and unreſerved converſation.

The clergyman ſaw, and confeſſed the force of Lucius's ſtratagem; but could comprehend nothing of the ſermon, or his reaſons for contradicting an aſſertion that had all the force of a ſelf-evident truth; and as he was now under leſs reſtraint, became very inquiſitive, in order to ſearch into the motives of this extraordinary conduct: but all the anſwer he could obtain from Lucius was, that he was really in earneſt, and that he would give him no reaſon to be diſſatisfied with his performance. So that he was obliged to wait, as well as the others, till the time appointed to gratify his curioſity took place.

Lucius had this day acted in a manner quite oppoſite to his uſual conduct; and I now ſaw that the man who had hitherto behaved with ſuch an artleſs ſimplicity of manners, had regulated his general behaviour from principle, and from choice; ſince we found that he was able, upon occaſion, to aſſume a character oppoſite to his own: and if this, Madam, contradicts any thing I have ſaid of him in my laſt letter, pray impute it to my ignorance of his abilities. The reſt of the afternoon was ſpent very agreeably; and Mr. Stevens, before he took his leave, gave me a hint, that he ſaw plainly that Lucius was only playing upon the two travellers; and added, that he would not loſe the opportunity of viſiting us on Saturday for any conſideration.

The next day, and part of Saturday, Lucius continued locked up in his cloſet, attended only by young Trueman, who ſerved him as an amanuenſis. The company came at the time appointed, together with Mellifont, my aunt, and Amelia, who had received an imperfect account of the affair from her brother; ſo that Lucius had a tolerable audience. As ſoon as they were ſeated, he aſked the two friends, whether they had ſeriouſly conſidered the affair, and if they had found out any important advantages attending the uſe of oaths and curſes in converſation. The ſtranger ingenuouſly confeſſed, that he had conſidered it pretty cloſely, and that, ſo far from ſeeing any advantage in it, he really began to be aſhamed of the habit, and declared, that if he was to think much more about it, he ſhould be obliged to leave it off; for the more he thought of it, the more indefenſible it appeared. Lucius then deſiring that nobody preſent would take any exceptions to any thing he ſaid, roſe up and began; while all preſent, having their curioſity ſtretched to the utmoſt extent,

tent, seemed to listen with extreme eagerness and attention. And, as I imagine that yours is attended with little less impatience, I here send you a copy, which Trueman has just transcribed for your use.

A SERMON IN PRAISE OF SWEARING IN CONVERSATION.

DEUT. vi. 13. The latter part of the verse,

And SHALL *swear by his name.*

'THERE is a set of men in the 'world, who need only be known 'in order to be despised; men, who are 'a constant subject for ridicule, and 'justly the derision of the gay and more 'refined part of the human species: men 'who are so stupid, as to be more enamoured with the pleasure of a benevolent action, more charmed with giving joy to the helpless and miserable, 'with drying up the tears of the distressed, or soothing the agonies of the 'bursting heart, than with the lordly 'pride of wanton power, than in rendering the wretched more wretched, than 'with spurning at patient merit, or even 'the satisfaction of racking tenants, 'hoarding wealth, or all the high gratification of a debauch; more delighted 'with the visionary pleasure of indulging their own reflections, and the applause of a good conscience, than with 'the charms of a bottle, the transports 'afforded by the lascivious wanton, or 'all the high-wrought indulgences of 'a luxurious appetite. And, in one 'word, to sum up their character, more 'afraid of a false, or even an unnecessary 'oath, than of the point of a sword.

'It is with these poor, mean-spirited 'wretches, that I am now to combat, 'in order to shew the great advantages 'that attend a strict compliance with 'the injunction in my next, *And thou 'shalt swear by his name.* I shall not 'here take up your time in examining 'the context, or even in considering 'what is meant by the command in my 'text, which some would confine to the 'necessary oaths taken in a court of 'judicature; but, like all sound divines, 'and in compliance with the custom of 'all good commentators and disputants, 'consider the passage before us in that 'latitude which is most adapted to 'answer my particular design.

'One man takes his text, and endeavours, with the most elaborate eloquence, to prove that the Bible he 'preaches from is a work not fit to be 'read; that it never was designed for 'the instruction of such blockheads as 'his audience, who, by looking into it, 'incur damnation. What concerns 'all to know, must be read by none 'but the priest, or whom he shall appoint. How glorious that revelation, 'which, in the hands of the multitude, 'points the way to misery; but, in those 'of the church, to eternal life! It is he 'alone who can infallibly inform us, 'that love, and charity, and compassion, 'and tenderness, so often mentioned in 'that old book the Bible, mean spite, 'and hatred, and inquisition, and burning faggots.

'Another, with pious snuffle, and all 'the moving force of sighs and groans, 'proves that the God of truth is the God 'of falshood; and finds his scheme 'contradicted by the language of Scripture, for Scripture nicely distinguishes 'between a revealed and a secret will, 'both opposite, both contradictory to 'each other. Scripture he proves to 'be a lye; his opinion he proves to be 'true from Scripture. He wisely turns 'out common sense, to make room for 'grace. He degrades reason as being 'in league with the devil, and, in the 'pious ardour of his heart, saves himself the trouble of thinking, and cries 'out—*I believe, because it is impossible.* Ye deists, rejoice in these your 'friends! Admit them into your societies! They, like you, can darken 'truth; they have assisted you in setting fragment against fragment; and, 'when the dazzling sun-beams shine too 'bright, can wisely shut their eyes. Let 'me too be permitted to rank myself on 'this side, and, countenanced by such 'great authorities, to take a text that 'suits my present purpose, regardless 'of every other passage that may be supposed to contradict it; nay, regardless 'of the text itself, any farther than as 'it may serve for a plausible introduction to what I have to offer.

'It is sufficient, therefore, that we 'have here a command to swear by the

'name

'name of God; which I ſhall take, in 'the common and vulgar ſenſe of the 'word Swearing, to mean, not only all 'manner of oaths, but whatever goes 'under the denomination of ſwearing in 'converſation, as oaths, curſes, and 'imprecations.

'In treating this ſubject, I ſhall con-'ſider—

'I. The many advantages attending 'the frequent uſe of oaths, curſes, and 'imprecations: in which will be ſuf-'ficiently proved, the falſeneſs of that 'aſſertion, that ſwearing is attended 'with neither pleaſure nor profit.

'II. Anſwer ſome objections. And,

'III. Make a ſuitable application.

'I. I am to conſider the many ad-'vantages ariſing from a frequent uſe 'of oaths, curſes, and imprecations.

'In the *firſt* place, this genteel ac-'compliſhment is a wonderful help to 'diſcourſe; as it ſupplies the want of 'good ſenſe, learning, and eloquence. 'The illiterate and ſtupid, by the help 'of oaths, become orators; and he, 'whoſe wretched intellects would not 'permit him to utter a coherent ſen-'tence, by this eaſy practice, excites the 'laughter, and fixes the attention, of a 'brilliant and joyous circle. He begins 'a ſtory, he is loſt in a vacuity of 'thought, and would inſtantly, to his 'eternal diſhonour, become ſilent, did 'not a ſeries of oaths and imprecations 'give him time to gather up, or rather 'ſeek the thread of his diſcourſe: he 'begins again, again he is loſt; but hav-'ing complimented his friends, by 'calling for eternal damnation on 'them all, he has thought what to ſay 'next, and finds himſelf able to pro-'ceed with a ſentence or two more. 'Thus he ſtill ſtalks on, while thought 'follows ſlowly after. Bleſſed expedient! 'by the uſe of which, polite converſa-'tion glides on uninterrupted, while 'ſound is happily ſubſtituted in the 'place of ſenſe: by this, mankind com-'municate familiar noiſes to each other, 'with as little intellectual ability and 'labour as a pack of well-matched 'hounds, ſo often the object of their 'delight and admiration! O how pre-'poſterouſly abſurd, then, how falſe, 'and contrary to experience, is that ri-'diculous aſſertion, that ſwearing is at-'tended with neither pleaſure nor profit! 'For what higher pleaſure, what greater 'profit and advantage can a man enjoy, 'than to find, that, *in ſpite of nature, 'who has directed him to be ſilent*, he 'can hear himſelf talk—talk without 'ſtammering, or drawing out each hea-'vy ſentence, that lags behind, to wait 'on thought! Ye ideots, rejoice! Ye 'coxcombs, whoſe coſtive brain ne'er 'dictated the flowing ſentiment, be 'glad! Ye, whom learning never fired, 'in ſtupid ignorance loſt, exult! Bleſt 'with eaſe and indolence, you talk, and 'thoſe, like you, admire; while liſten-'ing demons clap their wings, and grin 'applauſe!

'Forgive me, Sirs, if, fired with my 'ſubject, I loſe my uſual modera-'tion; for who can help being warm-'ed at the motion of ſuch glorious ad-'vantages as theſe? advantages, which 'level the converſation of the mighty, 'and raiſe the oratory of the carman 'and porter! Here the loweſt frequent-'ly excel; the plowman, with clouted 'ſhoon, outvies his competitors, and 'practiſes the vices of the gentleman, 'with more ſucceſs than the lord of the 'manor, or the ſplendid courtier, 'though adorned with ſtar and gar-'ter. Here no abilities, no learning, 'are neceſſary; no ſtudious hours are 'required to attain perfection. Tropes 'and figures, all the flowers of oratory, 'all the pedantry of the ſchools, are 'vain and uſeleſs trumpery, compared 'to theſe ornaments: they require pains 'and ſtudy, nor can be applied without 'judgment, and the toil of reading 'what are fooliſhly called the ingenious 'and polite authors: but ſwearing is, 'as I have ſaid, learning to the ignorant, 'eloquence to the blockhead, vivacity 'to the ſtupid, and wit to the coxcomb.

'Secondly, Oaths and curſes are a 'proof of a moſt heroick courage, at 'leaſt in appearance, which anſwers 'the ſame end. For who can doubt 'the valour, the intrepidity, of him 'who braves the thunder of Hea-'ven, who affronts the moſt formidable 'Being in the univerſe, and treats with 'contempt that all-enlivening principle 'which ſuſtains and animates the whole 'creation? To what a noble elation is 'the heart of the coward conſcious, 'when he thus defies the Almighty, 'and imprecates the fires of hell! Let 'the bluſtering bully domineer, let him 'roar out his curſes, and threaten all 'who dare provoke the vengeance of 'his potent arm; let him terrify by

'a ſurly

a ſurly frown, and intimidate, when with portly gait he vents ten thouſand oaths and curſes on the wretch who impudently preſumes to oppoſe his mighty will—who dares doubt his courage? Who can believe, that the cane, or the toe, when duly applied, have ſuch magick power, as to make him twiſt and writhe himſelf like a ſerpent, till, with this exerciſe, his joints and his mind become ſo ſupple, that he can bend and cringe, and aſk pardon? Let the meek ſoldier boaſt his deeds of war, and with oaths and execrations lace the ſelf-flattering tale; who can believe that ſo great a hero ſhould have an antipathy to the ſight of ſteel? or that he, who challenges the blaſting lightning to fall on his head, would tremble and turn pale at the flaſh of a piſtol? No, this muſt never be imagined; for can it be ſuppoſed that he has leſs bravery in the field than in the tavern! With theſe bluſtering expletives, then, the coward may ſtrut and look big, and every minute give freſh proofs of an invincible courage: he may bravely ſport with that Being, whoſe frown would make the heavens and earth to tremble; he may ſeem to ſnatch the vengeance from his uplifted hand, and throw it on his foe; he may invoke the wrath of Heaven; and who can imagine that he is afraid of death, when he is continually calling for all the horrors of hell?

'Thirdly, He hereby not only gives a proof of his courage, but informs the world, that he is intirely diveſted of all the fooliſh prejudices of education, and has unlearned

"All that the nurſe, and all the prieſt
"have taught:"

that he has not only ſhook off the ſhackles of enthuſiaſm, but has baniſhed from his mind that reverence of the Deity, which is the foundation of every ſyſtem of religion. He is not ſuſpected of being ſuch a fool as to want inſtruction, ſince it cannot be imagined that he has ſo dull a taſte as to go to church, unleſs, if he be a gentleman, to ogle the ladies; if a clown, to ſleep; or, if a tradeſman, in complaiſance to the ſober old women of both ſexes, who happen to be his cuſtomers: and he has this additional advantage, that he will never be taken for a pious churchman, a preſbyterian, a quaker, or a methodiſt. And, in reality, he is ſo far from being a bigot to any religious principles, that he belongs to no religious ſociety upon earth. That he is not, nor can be a chriſtian, is evident; for what is chriſtianity? It is extenſive benevolence, humanity, and virtue, to which he bids defiance with every curſe. He cannot be a deiſt, becauſe they openly profeſs the utmoſt reverence for the Deity; and, for the ſame reaſon, he can neither be a Jew, or a Mahometan, or a follower of Confucius. No, nor even an atheiſt; ſince we cannot conceive, that he would ſo often call upon God, if he was thoroughly convinced there was no ſuch Being in the univerſe: however, he every minute lets us ſee, that he does not fear him. How unlicenſed is his freedom! how glorious and unconſtrained! Let the wretches, who meanly bend their wills, and regulate their actions, by the ſage dictates of reaſon and conſcience; who ſtoop to follow the rules of religion, and call them ſacred; let theſe bridle their tongues, let theſe confine themſelves within the narrow limits preſcribed by reaſon and good ſenſe; the ſwearer knows better; ſenſe, and reaſon, and religion, are all ſubſervient to his will; he diſdains their fetters, and rules thoſe which rule all the world beſide.

'Fourthly, and laſtly, Another advantage which attends the vice of the gentleman, this noble accompliſhment, is, that it ſometimes raiſes him to dignity and honour. Under this head, indeed, I take a greater latitude, and advert to a remote conſequence of the practice of ſwearing: but as there is ſuch a cloſe concatenation in all our habits, and virtue and vice are progreſſive in their very nature, I ſhould not do compleat juſtice to my ſubject, if I omitted the conſideration of it in this particular view. When a man, therefore, by a happy aſſociation of ideas, joins to the other advantages of this vice ideas of wealth and grandeur; when he ſees no argument that appears of any weight to bind him down to the unthrifty rules of honeſty; and his regard for his own private advantage is too ſtrong to let him have any for the private property of his

'neighbour;

'neighbour; what ſhould hinder him, 'when a fair opportunity offers, from 'raiſing himſelf, by the ruin of his 'neighbour, his companion, or his 'deareſt friend? He has ſwore to a thou-'ſand lyes in company, without any 'view of private advantage; what ſhould 'prevent him, then, from taking one 'falſe oath, when the advantage is ſo 'conſiderable? Surely, neither conſci-'ence, nor reaſon, nor religion, can do 'this: no, that is impoſſible; for I, 'who am as infallible as any dignified 'prieſt that ever mounted a pulpit, 'have aſſerted, that theſe are all ſub-'ſervient to his will.

'Here the ſwearer, with an unbounded 'ambition, aſpires to ſeize on wealth, 'and boldly to graſp at thoſe riches 'which fortune has fooliſhly given to a 'more deſerving perſon; and this in 'ſpite of Juſtice and Equity, who are his 'profeſſed enemies. Thus he riſes above 'the multitude, and gains a laſting 'fame; not by blood and ſlaughter, 'but by cunning, deceit and artifice; 'by burſting through the moſt ſolemn 'engagements, breaking in ſunder the 'bonds of ſociety, and only violating 'what all honeſt men hold ſacred. 'Suppoſe that he fails in his attempt, 'and the property of the perſon he has 'attacked remains inviolate: he is con-'veyed to a caſtle, ſtrong as that of a 'crowned head; where no impertinent 'intruders dare appear to diſturb his 'repoſe: for in the day-time he has a 'porter to ſtand at his gate; in the 'night, his faithful attendants lock and 'bar his doors.

'Surrounded with guards, he pays a 'ſolemn viſit at the ſeat of Juſtice; he 'has the honour of being admitted to 'the royal bench; he converſes with that 'ſovereign perſonage herſelf, and, for a 'conſiderable time, takes up the whole 'attention of her prime miniſters, the 'lords of her court, who, aſſiduous to 'pay him all due reſpect, wait his coming 'in their proper habiliments; and though 'it be ever ſo early in the day, he is ne-'ver received with the diſreſpectful negli-'gence of an undreſs. The ceremony 'being over, he is re-conducted by the 'ſame guards who brought him thither, 'and who dare not preſume to leave him 'till he is ſafe within his palace. He now 'ſoon receives the reward of his baffled 'dexterity, the glorious fruit of his am-'bition. The day arrives, devoted to 'mirth and jollity, buſineſs and care are 'laid aſide, and every labouring hand 'has now a holy-day. He walks, or rides 'in his triumphal car, attended by a 'numerous throng of gazing ſpectators: 'he is mounted above their heads, and 'his neck, not his temples, adorned 'with a civick wreath, and his wriſts 'with an embrazure, compoſed of a 'matter ſomething coarſer, indeed, 'than that of pearls and diamonds. 'This is no ſooner done, than gaping 'thouſands ſend forth ſhouts of joy, 'and bending low, even to the ground, 'pay him homage; then riſing up, with 'loud acclamations, preſent their tri-'bute, ſtriving who moſt ſhall pay, who 'ofteneſt bend. He is covered, he is 'loaded, with their gifts, and ſenſibly 'touched with their bounty. The more 'he gains, the more unenvied here he 'ſtands; while all rejoice, and give the 'applauſe that is his due. But, let 'his modeſty be ever ſo great, let his 'bluſhes be like the trickling drops of 'criminſon, painting his baſhful cheek, 'and prompting a willingneſs to retire 'from theſe honours; yet one hour at 'leaſt he is reſtrained to ſtay, to receive 'the willing offerings of the multitude. 'Thrice happy man! had conſcience, 'or had reaſon ſwayed, thou never 'hadſt thus been bleſt; unknown thou 'mighteſt have lived, unknown have 'died.

'II. I come now, in the ſecond place, 'to anſwer ſome objections; but as theſe, 'after what has been ſaid, muſt appear 'extremely trifling, I ſhall be as con-'ciſe as poſſible, and haſten to a con-'cluſion. It is ſaid,

'In the *firſt* place, that the ſwearer acts 'in direct oppoſition to all the rules of 'right reaſon.

'But how can this be called an ob-'jection againſt ſwearing? What have 'we to do with right reaſon?—We 'leave it to the dull wretches, the men 'of reflection: and yet there are ſome 'of theſe who attempt to mimick us: 'but if they act inconſiſtently with their 'own abilities, let them look to that. An 'upright man is a downright fool, if he 'ſwears at all. Let thoſe who can talk 'without it, extol their wonderous ta-'lents; they have no need of this polite 'vice to recommend them to the world. 'The ſqueamiſh wretch who is afraid of 'a lye, has no need to ſwear to what he 'ſays, for he is certain that his word will

'be readily taken. But away with these *yea and nay* wretches, men born to be 'pointed at; the sheepish, the sober 'fools, who, regardless of the boundless liberty we enjoy, talk of rectitude 'of manners, religion, and conscience.

'Secondly, and lastly, it is objected, 'that it is one of the most senseless, unnatural, rude, and unmannerly vices, 'that ever was invented.

'This, it must be confessed, is paying 'a fine compliment to at least half the 'polite world. How can that be *rude* and *unmannerly* which gives such a grace 'to conversation? 'Tis true, we express ourselves strongly, and use none 'of those languid, sneaking, epithets in 'our discourse, which your modest men, 'your men of humanity, make use of; 'but, as we talk without meaning, nobody can say that we mean ill. And, 'indeed, it is a very injurious expression to say that this is *unnatural*, when 'so many of us have the honour of being universally deemed to be little better than *naturals*.

'And now, Sirs, I have proved so 'effectually the great advantages attending the practice of this genteel and fashionable vice, that there needs but 'one word by way of application.

'Consider, O consider, how inestimable are the advantages I have mentioned! If there is any one here desirous of obtaining these, and yet is troubled and intimidated with the impertinence of a restless conscience, flying in his face, and threatening to 'haunt him like a ghost, let him but 'follow my advice, and conscience will 'fall asleep. Would he steel his heart 'against compunction, let him advance 'by degrees. If he is afraid of an oath, 'let him come as near it as he can; let 'him cry, *Egad*, *ramnation*, and *o'dram ye*; let him thus chip and 'carve a few common-place expressions, 'to fit them them to his conscience, and 'the business will be done. This practice will render familiar; and the 'coward, who first trembled at the 'thought of hell, will soon have the courage to call for damnation.

'And now, ye who have long indulged this vice, who have arrived at 'perfection in this great accomplishment, and, by this means, have gained 'that applause which nature would have 'denied you, which reason refused, and 'conscience condemned; you, I say, 'who, by the assistance of this vice, 'have distinguished yourselves, either 'as the orator, the pimp, or the bully; 'you who, with more distinguished 'glory, have graced the lofty pillory; 'and you who, under specious oaths of 'speedy marriage, have violated virgin 'innocence, and rewarded the maid 'that loved you with eternal infamy; 'consider these noble advantages, applaud, congratulate yourselves, and 'rejoice! You have not stopped at the 'most flagrant impieties; you have 'challenged and defied the blasting 'power of Heaven to do it's worst; and, 'with a disinterestedness peculiar to 'yourselves, have generously sold the 'reversion of eternal, inexhaustible happiness, merely for the pleasure of affronting that great beneficent Being 'who has prepared it for you, your indulgent Creator and Almighty Friend! 'How nobly ungrateful! how unselfish 'your conduct! Boast your bravery, 'and consider the wisdom of the exchange: for how blind must you be to 'every self-interested view, how deaf to 'the calls of self-love, while infinite 'unbounded felicity has no charms, 'when standing in competition with the 'delight of affronting a benefactor, 'with the pleasure of a curse, and the 'satisfaction of hearing your own impertinence! STUPIDITY, IGNORANCE, and FOLLY, are on your side: act, therefore, like men who 'profess to be their friends, and like the 'true enemies of REASON, RELIGION, 'VIRTUE, and COMMON SENSE. 'You have seen your practice justified 'with advantages which you have never before thought of; if these have 'any weight, if these have any charms, 'let them have all their influence. To 'sum up all, let every man act consistently with his real character; and, by 'his indulgence of this practice, or his 'forbearance, let his abilities, or his 'follies, stand confessed.'

You have now, I suppose, read this extraordinary performance: but the striking action, the natural expression varied into different tones, the sneering air in which he uttered some sentences, and the thundering pompous manner in which he pronounced those bordering on the bombast, you can form no idea of; these are still behind, and not to be expressed, even though I should endeavour to follow

low the example of that memorable preacher, who inſerted in the margin of his printed ſermon the proper places where to cough, and where to blow his noſe. Lucius had carefully ſtudied theſe particulars; which, however trifling they may appear, are eſſential parts of oratory. Theſe ſurpaſſed all deſcription; they gave life and energy to the diſcourſe: every ſentence was animated with a degree of fire peculiar to itſelf, which at once warmed our minds and ſpread abroad the light of conviction.

Lucius had no ſooner concluded this long harangue, than the ſtranger appeared moſt forward to thank him; and not only acknowledged the ſatire juſt, but very honeſtly confeſſed that he felt the force of every word, that he was ſhocked at a practice he had too much indulged, and reſolved never more to be guilty of it. My couſin ſaid, he believed Lucius was run mad, and that he could not underſtand half of it. The clergyman, though he liked it very well in the main, thought it bordered a little on the profane: but Mr. Stevens was very warm in it's defence; as was my aunt, Mellifont, and Amelia; though the latter objected to the puns and play upon the words; which Lucius vindicated, as agreeable to the ridiculous character he was ſometimes obliged to aſſume, and as moſt likely to ſtrike the attention of thoſe perſons he had in view, who are commonly pleaſed with mere ſounds, and but little influenced by arguments that require reflection.

I am ſo uſed to write long letters to you, that I hardly know how to ſend you a ſhort one. It is a week ſince I began this; it is therefore time to conclude, and to aſſure you, that I am, very ſincerely, your ladyſhip's conſtant friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XL.

DEAR MADAM,

WHEN I concluded my laſt, I had ſeveral things to add, which I think worthy of notice; and therefore, without any farther preface, I ſhall continue the ſubject.

The perſon whom I have hitherto diſtinguiſhed by the name of my couſin's fellow-traveller, and whoſe real name is Smith, now expreſſed an extraordinary eſteem for Lucius, which did not ſeem to fall very ſhort of the moſt cordial friendſhip. His confidence and aſſurance, which was before the ſource of great impertinence, was, at this time, (permit, Madam, the expreſſion) melted down by a kind of deference and ſhame, ariſing from a ſenſe of folly, and a conſciouſneſs of ſuperior worth, into a modeſt manly diffidence, which ſerved to check the firſt impulſes to an idle gaiety, and cured him, at leaſt in our company, of that forward, talkative temper, which had before rendered his converſation very diſguſtful. His ingenuity in confeſſing his crime prepoſſeſſed us in his favour; and we ſoon found him a ſenſible companion, in ſpite of that thoughtfulneſs that now threw a cloud over his natural vivacity; a thoughtfulneſs that ſeemed to derive it's ſource from a ſenſe of inward guilt, and the ſecret reproaches of his own mind. My aunt made him a very handſome compliment on that open frankneſs of heart which had made him dare to confeſs that he had been in an error; but ſhe could not do this without a ſigh, and giving an affectionate look at her ſon. Lucius let us know that ſhe had ſpoke his ſentiments, and he was now regarded as a perſon worthy of being admitted to a nearer and more intimate acquaintance. Mr. Smith, though very much taken up with his own thoughts, ſeemed extremely aſſiduous to pleaſe, and to render himſelf agreeable to every perſon in the company, but more eſpecially ſo to Lucius. He obſerved the reſpect, the friendſhip, the ſweet complacency, that ſubſiſted between Mellifont, Mr. Stevens, and us; he inſtantly regarded theſe two gentlemen as his friends, and addreſſed them in a manner very different to his former behaviour. He obſerved the regard we expreſſed for the worthy clergyman; he now, therefore, treated him with reſpect. My couſin ſeemed to have loſt his friend; and having nobody to ſtrike out his feeble ſpark of fire, and to give him an opportunity to diſplay his talents, ſat ſilent, with a moſt forlorn and diſconſolate countenance, his eyes fixed on Mr. Smith, and a viſible uneaſineſs at ſeeing him engroſs ſo much of the converſation, and in ſuch a manner, too, as rendered it impoſſible for him to have any ſhare in it. He was, therefore, out of his element: he was jealous of the ſuperior reſpect ſhewn to his friend; he was confounded, diſappointed in all his high-raiſed hopes of future pleaſure,

and yet knew not how to complain. In ſhort, he appeared like the figure of moping Melancholy ſeated on a tomb. What a ſurprizing metamorphoſis!

The reſt of the day was ſpent with great ſatisfaction; for though the ſubjects of diſcourſe were extremely grave, yet our minds partook of that ſober, ſolemn kind of entertainment, which, while we enjoy it, is attended with more delight than the frolick laugh of mirth, and which has the power of accompanying, with a ſerene ſatisfaction, the moſt diſtant reflections: and indeed, ſo exquiſitely ſweet were theſe calmly-pleaſing and ſelf-approving ſenſations, and ſo intent were they all on the ſubjects of converſation, that they did not depart till late in the evening, and even then it was with a viſible reluctance.

They had all prepared to go, when Mr. Smith, taking Lucius and me aſide, ſaid, with an affectionate tone of voice—'I hope you will both forgive my impertinent behaviour at my firſt viſit; and I am the more ſolicitous about this, as I have the ambition of being ranked among the number of your friends. Can you, Sir, can you, Madam, excuſe my folly? I am thoroughly ſenſible of it in every particular, and am as heartily aſhamed of it; I wiſh your couſin was ſo too. As for me, I am going to lament in private. My boaſted travels, the ſubject of my former vanity, have been the ſource of a thouſand extravagancies; inſtead of improving, they have only ſerved to debauch my mind: but theſe are no ſooner finiſhed, than I meet with a perſon who ſets them before me in the trueſt light. The contraſt between you and me has been too glaring not to be obſerved. What a wretch do I think myſelf! But I muſt no ſooner know than leave you. I leave you with reluctance, and it is very probable that I ſhall never ſee you again.' Lucius replied, by giving him the moſt frank and engaging aſſurances of his friendſhip; and two days after he ſet forward on his journey. But it is time to return to ourſelves.

Prudilla, Madam, has now breathed her laſt; but, notwithſtanding her former terror and agitation of mind, her laſt minutes were perfectly compoſed; and, as nature was quite ſpent, ſhe left the world without thoſe ſtruggles, and convulſive agonies, which render that awful moment ſo terrible with perſons of ſtronger ſpirits.

We have been ſeveral times to my father's to ſee the child, and both my mother and my ſiſter Marilla ſeem perfectly fond of it. It is really an engaging little creature, and I think it impoſſible for me to help loving it. My duty, in this caſe, is extremely eaſy, ſince it is attended with all the pleaſure of following my own inclinations, joined to the additional ſatisfaction it gives to Lucius.

An affair has happened which gives me great uneaſineſs, the particulars of which I ſhall acquaint you with in my next. I am your ever affectionate

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLI.

DEAR MADAM,

I Am now to relate to you the cauſe of that uneaſineſs I mentioned in my laſt; for as you have hitherto been the confident of all my little affairs, I have contracted ſuch a habit of laying my thoughts before you, that I really believe I ſhould find no ſmall difficulty in concealing from you any circumſtance in which I have an immediate concern. How great is the force of cuſtom! No ſooner does any thing the leaſt extraordinary happen, but I conſider it as contributing to your amuſement; and frequently ſit down to acquaint you with my affairs, even before I have ſufficiently reflected whether they are of importance enough to deſerve your notice; ſo that whether you are diverted with my ſtory, or diſguſted with my impertinence, depends entirely upon chance.

Some time ago, I took a ſervant on the recommendation of a poor, though honeſt, old woman in the neighbourhood; but I needed not the character ſhe gave me to prepoſſeſs me in her favour. The innocent and artleſs modeſty of her looks, and the eaſy unconſtrained freedom of her behaviour, were the firſt things that I took notice of, and which really inſpired me with a favourable opinion of her virtue and diſcretion: but this opinion was ſoon heightened by the ſweetneſs of her temper, and a certain languor in her looks. I hardly ever found her alone, but I obſerved her in tears: from hence I began to pity her; and,

and, by degrees, this pity aroſe to a kind of friendſhip. I therefore made her ſervice as eaſy to her as poſſible; and from being at firſt my chamber-maid, raiſed her to be my woman. As her conſtitution was very delicate, this was a ſtation that I thought ſhe had the greateſt reaſon to be ſatisfied with; but though ſhe expreſſed the higheſt ſenſe of gratitude, yet I could diſcover no alteration in her diſpoſition. Being ſtill deſirous to contribute to her ſatisfaction, I endeavoured, by all the ways I could think of, to diſcover the cauſe of her uneaſineſs; but ſhe evaded all my enquiries with ſo much politeneſs and good ſenſe, that I reſolved, at length, to put a ſtop to my curioſity, till time ſhould wear off her reſerve, or ſome accident, without her conſent, inform me of her affairs.

Your ladyſhip is, perhaps, offended at my offering to entertain you with the trifling affairs of my ſervants, in which you are ready to imagine there can be nothing of importance enough to engage my concern: but have patience; I don't doubt but I ſhall ſoon obtain your approbation with regard to this particular.

I had been called away in the middle of my laſt letter to you, and was returning to my chamber to finiſh it; when recollecting that I ſhould want to uſe a ſtick of ſealing-wax, which I had the day before given to my favourite Dorothea, who, at her own requeſt, was gone to Nottingham, I ſtepped into her room to look for it. But how great was my ſurprize, when I beheld upon her table a gold ſnuff-box finely chaſed! What could I think! I called Lucius; he came; and, at firſt, ſuggeſted every argument he could think of to remove my ſuſpicions: but comparing the poſſeſſion of ſo valuable a box with Dorothea's circumſtances, and the manner in which ſhe was recommended to me, he was induced to confirm the opinion I had conceived of her diſhoneſty. We both concluded that I had careſſed an artful, abandoned wretch; upon which a number of circumſtances preſently roſe in our minds that ſtrengthened this heavy charge. Her box was inſtantly broke open; when, among other things, we found a crucifix ſet with diamonds, and a chaplet of pearls, and a maſs-book in Latin and Engliſh. Lucius was enraged, and inſiſted that ſhe ought to ſuffer the penalty of the law; and that he could neither excuſe it to himſelf, nor to his country, to ſcreen her from juſtice; ſince, in that caſe, he ſhould be anſwerable for the next robbery ſhe committed. We both bleſſed the diſcovery we had made; and did not at all queſtion but ſhe waited for an opportunity to let in a gang of thieves, in the night, to rob, and, perhaps, murder us in our ſleep: and what confirmed this ſuſpicion was, our preſently hearing from the ſervants, that ſhe had ſeveral times been ſeen to give ſilver to ſome ſhabby, ill-looking fellows, who, under pretence of begging, frequently came to the door. Thus prejudice, Madam, when once raiſed, is a medium that changes the colour of objects, and ſhapes them to our fancy. Our fears being awaked, imagination is ſet to work to invent new ſcenes of ideal horror. We then deal in nothing but the gloomy and the diſmal; we ſtart at the rovings of our diſtempered minds; new dangers ariſe at every thought; we catch at every cauſe of diſcontent; and, anxious to ſwell the inward perturbation, ſearch only for freſh grounds of uneaſineſs. No wonder that the object, that raiſes theſe horrid ſenſations, grows every moment more deformed. While we view only the ſhades of the direful character, we conclude the whole to be dark and odious; virtue becomes affectation, beauty a maſk, and every perfection hypocriſy, put on only to conceal ſome deadly purpoſe. Thus, by a kind of contraſt, deformity itſelf becomes more deformed. From hence we precipitately concluded, that, as we had reaſon to believe her a thief, ſhe was a murderer too, and regarded ourſelves as victims to be ſacrificed to her avarice. How frightful the thought! Old Mr. Trueman was called to give us his opinion; when he adviſed us to ſend to the next juſtice for a warrant, to procure a conſtable, and to ſearch the poor woman's houſe who had recommended her.

The warrant was ſoon procured; when Lucius and I, with the good old man, attended the conſtable, to ſee if we could find any thing there belonging to us. The old woman was terrified to the laſt degree. She was ſurrounded with many conveniences, which, a ſhort time before, ſhe was known to want; and ſeemed raiſed, in ſome degree, to a comfortable independence. From whence could this ariſe, but from her being a neceſſary inſtrument in Dorothea's crimes? This was the inference we drew from it. Mr.

Trueman

Trueman therefore ſecured her, and let her know that ſhe muſt not leave the houſe: but ſhe appeared more concerned for her friend than herſelf; ſhe would not hear of her being a thief; ſhe ran on in her praiſes. At laſt, a tea-cheſt was found, and ſhe readily acknowledged it was Dorothea's, and that ſhe had the key. It was therefore broke open; when we found in it upwards of fifty guineas, ſome broad pieces, ſeveral very fine rings and a gold watch wrapped up in cotton to prevent it's being damaged. But what ſtruck me moſt, was a pair of diamond ear-rings: theſe I was perſuaded I knew again; I was convinced that they were the ſame which my father gave me to keep in remembrance of my dear mamma, and which he had preſented to her before their marriage. What could I ſay? I would not have loſt them for ten times their real value. Had I not reaſon to be enraged? To rob me of what ſhe knew I deemed invaluable, of what I prized on my dear mother's account; me, who had given her my eſteem and my friendſhip; me, who had raiſed her from nothing, who had careſſed her, who had loaded her with obligations, and advanced her almoſt to the character of my companion: how ungrateful! And yet this robbery was, in all probability, only a prelude to the miſchief ſhe was to bring upon us.

Theſe, Madam, were my reflections, and thus I vented aloud my reſentment; while the poor woman, terrified almoſt to death, cried, and, with many ſighs and tears, lamented the ruin of a girl who had been ſo kind a benefactreſs; intermixing loud and violent proteſtations of her own innocence.

After the ſearch was finiſhed, the conſtable was ordered to keep the woman a priſoner, in her own houſe, till Dorothea's return; when he was to take them together before the magiſtrate who had granted the warrant. Mean while we went home; and I, with a ſorrowful, aching heart, retired with Lucius to talk over the affair, and to wait the return of Dorothea. Almoſt every ſervant in the houſe ſhewed their envy, by putting the moſt invidious conſtruction upon her actions; and, had I been diſpoſed to liſten to them, I verily believe they would never have ceaſed their invectives. All the miſchief that had been done in the houſe would have been, by ſome one or other, laid at her door; and ſhe was, indeed, charged with faults of which I knew her entirely innocent.

We had waited about an hour for her return; when my chambermaid told me that ſhe was come home, that they had charged her with the fact, and that her very look condemned her. Lucius gave immediate orders to have her taken to the poor woman's, and that the conſtable ſhould carry them both before the juſtice; adding, that he would follow them immediately. This news was no ſooner carried down, than we heard an extraordinary buſtle; and, upon ringing the bell to know what was the matter, a ſervant came to inform us that ſhe had the impudence to diſpute their maſter's command, and refuſed to go till ſhe had ſeen me. I then gave orders that ſhe ſhould be brought up. But I had hardly ſpoke the word, when ſhe burſt open the door, and ran into the room, attended by the cook-maid, and another or two of the lower ſervants, who ſtopped at the door. She came up to me as if for protection, and ſtood trembling, pale, and out of breath: in ſhort, ſhe had loſt her cap; her hair was in the utmoſt diſorder, and her cloaths almoſt torn from her back. What an affecting ſight! Lucius ſeemed ſhocked, and demanded what was the reaſon of their treating her in this manner, with a tone of voice that ſufficiently expreſſed his diſapprobation. They laid the fault on her, who would not let them take her away civilly; when Lucius obſerving that they had no right to uſe violence without his leave, and ordered them ſternly to withdraw, our thoughts were turned upon the ſingle object, that with a look of terror ſtood panting before us. Indeed, Madam, my heart relented. Struck with a figure ſo moving, I could ſcarcely refrain from tears; but the next moment, recollecting that ſhe was a thief, a vile hypocrite, who had abuſed my good nature, indignation again uſurped the place of pity.

After a ſhort ſilence, Lucius, with a ſtern voice began—'Thou wicked, 'unhappy wretch,' ſaid he, 'don't attempt to excuſe and palliate your 'crimes; but, by an open confeſſion, diſcover whom you have robbed, what were 'your intentions, and who are your accomplices.

'complices. This, I aſſure you, will 'be the only way to obtain mercy; for, 'upon theſe conſiderations, I now pro-'miſe to make uſe of all my influence 'in your favour.'—'O Sir! O Ma-'dam!' cried ſhe, interrupting him with an aſſured air; 'for God's ſake, 'hear me. You know not who I am. 'If I do not convince you that I am 'injured, extremely injured, let me ſuf-'fer all that the law can inflict. Let me 'tell you, Sir, that I neither aſk nor 'deſire mercy. The innocent have no 'need of mercy.'—'Take care, take 'care of what you ſay,' replied Lucius. 'I would give a great deal to find you 'innocent; but ſuch ſtrong circum-'ſtances——' 'I wiſh, with all my 'heart,' ſaid I, 'that you could prove 'your innocence; but I am afraid that 'is impoſſible. Such convincing proofs! '—And my ear-rings, too!—' 'What 'ear-rings, Madam?' returned ſhe, without a bluſh: 'you will not, ſurely, 'ſay that I have ſtole your ear-rings?'—'Yes,' ſaid Lucius; 'they were found 'in a tea-cheſt that belongs to you, and 'I have them here to produce before the 'magiſtrate.'

It was obſervable, that the terror which at firſt had all the ſymptoms of guilt, wore off every moment; and, indeed, fear and affright impreſs upon the countenance of the moſt innocent marks which may be eaſily miſtaken for indications of the conſcious wickedneſs of an abandoned mind. How abſurd, then, is it for people to pretend to form a judgment from ſuch equivocal appearances! She now very calmly deſired to ſee the ear rings. Lucius took them out of a piece of paper, and gave them into her hand; when, inſtead of the confuſion which I expected to find in her countenance, ſhe replied—'So I 'find I am condemned for ſtealing what 'is my own.'—'Yours!' ſaid I, amazed; 'you will not, ſurely, ſay that theſe ear-'rings are yours! How could you 'come by them? Beſides, I dare ſay 'they are mine: why, girl, I could 'ſwear it.'—'Hold, hold, Madam,' ſaid ſhe. 'Are yours loſt, then? Are 'they not in your dreſſing-box?'—'I 'have not ſo much as looked,' I replied; 'however, to convince you, I will look 'now, though I am perſuaded it will be 'to no purpoſe: I know them too well 'to be miſtaken.' Here I went for my dreſſing-box; and bringing it, with much difficulty, under my arm, opened it before her; when, to my entire confuſion, the firſt thing I ſet my eyes on was the very ear-rings I had laid to her charge. I bluſhed; and was ſo ſtruck with the ſight, that I had not the power to ſpeak a word. Lucius, therefore, reſumed. 'Well, Dorothea,' ſaid he, 'your in-'nocence, in this particular, is ſuffi-'ciently recommended; how glad ſhould 'we be, if it was poſſible for you to 'clear yourſelf of the reſt! But how 'you could come by them, I cannot 'imagine; I am afraid not honeſtly. I 'ſhould rejoice to find that we have 'injured you; and would, in that caſe, 'make you all poſſible ſatisfaction. But 'firſt put yourſelf in a little order—'your cap, Dorothea—your cap. But, 'admitting you innocent, which I muſt 'tell you I much doubt of, a glaſs of 'wine may be neceſſary to raiſe your 'ſpirits.' She now looked in the glaſs, and bluſhing, began in a hurry to ſtroak and tie up her long diſhevelled locks with all the eager concern of a mind that had no other object in view but a regard for decency; telling me, at the ſame time, that the conſciouſneſs that ſhe could clear herſelf whenever ſhe pleaſed, was a better ſupport to her ſpirits than all the wine in the world. Her cap, which, being faſtened to her hair, hung low down her back, was preſently put on; and, by the confuſion in her looks, and the readineſs with which ſhe dreſſed her head, pinned up the rents in her gown, and reduced herſelf into a more becoming figure, let us ſee that nothing but ſuch an extraordinary perturbation of mind as that ſhe was in when ſhe ran into the room, could have made her ſo long inattentive to the decorums of her ſex. When ſhe had finiſhed this taſk, ſhe began—

'I am now to appear in a very different 'character from that in which you have 'hitherto known me. I am obliged to 'throw off the diſguiſe of a ſervant, and 'to reveal a ſecret which I would gladly 'have kept within my own breaſt, at 'leaſt for ſome time longer. Your ſu-'ſpicions, I perceive, ariſe from your 'finding a few things of value in the 'poſſeſſion of a ſervant; one whom you 'took into your houſe under the ap-'pearance of indigence and low birth. 'In order, then, to be reſtored to your 'favour, I have nothing more to do but 'to convince you that I am born of a

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'very honourable family, and that I 'may reasonably expect a fortune sufficient to entitle me to wear these objects of your suspicion. My father, 'who is now living, is a baronet, and 'enjoys a very plentiful estate in Lincolnshire; he was married to a lady 'of the Romish religion, and a mutual 'agreement was made to prevent any future uneasiness with regard to the 'education of their children. According to this agreement, my brother was 'educated a Protestant, while I was 'brought up by my mother in her own 'principles; but she dying about three 'years ago, I soon, too soon, felt the 'effects of her loss. She was scarcely 'buried, when my religious liberties 'were invaded; my father confessor was 'forbid to come near me; I was continually importuned with the solicitations of ministers whom my religion 'made it criminal for me to hear; my 'disregard of their instructions was resented as the highest act of disobedience. And thus, by performing what 'I thought my duty, I incurred a father's displeasure. If I stopped my 'ears to the arguments that were offered 'me, it was said that I resolved to be 'deaf to the voice of truth. They gave 'me a Bible—I durst not read it; they 'would read it to me, but it was unlawful for me to hear them, and, 'therefore, I would not suffer them to 'do it: this was construed into obstinacy. I durst not be so vain as to 'consult my own shallow reason, when 'I did not know but it might contradict the infallible doctrines of our holy 'church. I was now treated with extreme severity; but, at last, wearied out 'by my father's and my brother's importunities, I resolved to appear more 'tractable, and even went so far as sometimes to suffer my self to be conducted to 'the parish church, and to pretend at least 'that I was almost convinced: but this 'piece of hypocrisy was soon punished; 'it reached my director's ears; when, 'prompted by a zeal for my salvation, 'he, in my father's absence, got admission into the house, and gave me 'a very severe lecture on the insincerity of my conduct; exhorted me to be 'stedfast, and confirmed me by abundance of pious arguments: but before 'he had done, my father, who had been 'sent for by somebody that saw him in 'the house, and who had overheard 'great part of his discourse, entered 'the room in a violent passion, threatened to send the good man to jail, 'and actually kicked him down stairs.

'I was now treated with more severity than ever, was locked up in my 'room, and never permitted to see any 'company but such as were most disagreeable. A gentleman was introduced to me, and I was forced to receive his addresses: he was a zealous 'church-man, and so assiduous to please 'my father, that, in his presence, he 'seldom spoke of any thing but religion; and thus paying his court to 'him, instead of me, made him not more 'his friend than he made me his enemy. A day was appointed for my 'being married to the man in the world 'I had the greatest aversion to. What 'could I do? my prayers and intreaties 'were all to no purpose. I was drove 'to the last extremity, and had no other 'resource but flight. I therefore, one 'moon-light night, when all were in 'bed, disguised myself, and taking some 'of my mother's, and my own jewels, 'with the little money I had, putting 'it all, except five guineas, in a tea-chest, 'made my escape out of the house, by 'dropping out of the window, which 'was only one story high, and fled to 'the priest; but he not daring to conceal me, procured me a horse, and the 'same night I set out, hardly knowing 'where I went, and the next day reached this place before noon; when being 'very weary, I found a poor woman, 'to whom I told as much of my story 'as I thought necessary to raise her 'compassion: to her I gave the horse, 'which I had before paid for; and, by 'her recommendation, I had the favour 'of being admitted into your house as 'a servant.'

Our surprize, Madam, exceeded all description; we let her go on without interruption, merely for want of words proper to form our excuses. For my part, a number of circumstances, as she proceeded, arose in my mind, that confirmed every word she spoke, with the force of the most convincing evidence; the genteel air of her dress, her polite unconstrained behaviour on all occasions, joined to an extensive knowledge of the works of many of the most polite authors. I recollected that I had once heard her repeat a few lines from Tasso, and I had some reason to believe that she

she was a perfect mistress both of the French and Italian languages. She is a Papist. Her excuses for not joining in the family devotion, the frivolous pretences with which she always avoided reading to me any piece of religion—It was certainly so—she must be a Papist. I thought both Lucius and myself perfect fools for not seeing through, and knowing her in this disguise, a disguise too thin to hide her character from the least discerning eye. I looked at her person; I was struck at the disorder of her dress—frightful disorder! could I see it without redoubled confusion? I reflected on the indignities she had suffered; brutal indignities! A lady of fortune and distinction, my superior—what savage treatment! how much she was injured! What a bustle had we been making about nothing, only to shew our ignorance and hasty passion! Lucius was justly confounded, and hung down his head. She was still standing. 'Pray, Madam, be seated,' said I. She obeyed, and took a chair; and while we were meditating an apology for our preposterous behaviour, she resumed—

'I know, Madam, that I pay my 'court to a Protestant with a very ill 'grace, when I attempt to do it by con'fessing myself a Catholick; but I 'know, however, that you will vindi'cate me from a crime which you have 'unjustly laid to my charge. I can, in 'this case, give such additional testimo'nies of my innocence, as to strike ma'lice itself dumb. Much more shall 'I convince you, of whose goodness 'and humanity I have received a 'number of such pleasing instances as 'I never shall forget. Yet, as I am a 'Roman, you will probably join with 'my father, and while you preach to 'me of persecution and prejudice, suf'ficiently shew, like him, that you are 'capable of both. But do not Sir—O 'do not, Madam, abuse the confidence 'I have reposed in you. Don't give 'me up to the resentment of my rela'tions.'—'No, Madam,' cried Lucius, 'I will intermeddle in your af'fairs no farther than you are pleased 'to approve. But what apology shall 'I make? How shall I excuse our con'duct? You have been used so ill, that 'it is a kind of folly to ask your par'don. Indeed I am ashamed, and per'fectly sorry for my behaviour; and 'what recompence is in our power to 'make you, freely demand it.'—'I 'thank you, Sir,' returned she, smiling; 'there is really no reason at all for these 'apologies. I cannot help saying, 'that appearances were against me; and 'while you thought me what I seemed, 'you ought to have done what you did.' —'This is very generous, Madam,' said I; 'and the only return we can 'make, is to interest ourselves in your 'happiness.'—'I thank you both,' said she: 'but will you not then take part 'with my father? Do you promise to 'leave me, whilst I stay with you, to the 'free enjoyment of the only true reli'gion?'—'Yes, Madam,' Lucius replied, 'I promise it to you very sin'cerely. I am an enemy to persecution, 'and to every attempt to force the con'science, however misinformed. A true 'Protestant, from principle, hates all 'religious tyranny. He is, by profes'sion, the friend of liberty, and ought 'therefore to check every unjust sally 'that would lead him to violate it on 'the meanest object. We allow of 'no inquisition. The man who is a 'bigot, and yet disclaims infallibility, 'is a contradiction to himself; a con'tradiction as great as any we can lay 'to your charge. We, believe me, 'Madam, deal not in contradictions; 'ours is the religion of common sense; 'we ask not a blind obedience; nor do 'we attempt, by shutting the Bible, and 'laying the understanding in fetters, to 'close the eyes and the ears to the voice 'of God. I therefore blame your 'father, and resolve to make use of all 'my power to restore you to a perfect 'liberty; to awaken his affection, and, 'consequently, to give you a proper 'share in his fortune; and to do this 'only in concert with you. Mean 'while, make use of this house as your 'own.'—'I sincerely thank you,' said she, 'and shall readily embrace your 'offer. To be restored to my father's 'affection is, indeed, a blessing equal to 'my highest ambition. To be restored 'to this, without wounding my consci'ence!—I should have nothing more 'to wish for. O my heart! how it longs 'for the tender union! But the flat'tering hope is vain, vain indeed! 'How shall I see him! With what 'indignation will he look upon his 'daughter, a fugitive, an alien, a

'wretch, in his opinion, deſerving his 'utmoſt hatred! Methinks I ſee him 'ſtand before me, and with a ſtern and 'ſteady look, reproach and upbraid 'me for the uneaſineſs I have given 'him. Ah, Madam!' added ſhe, 'you 'have often found me in tears: you can 'now no longer wonder at the cauſe! I 'fear I muſt ſtill be unhappy—perhaps 'not: however, I will hope the beſt.' Here ſhe endeavoured to compoſe her looks; and wiping her eyes, which began to ſwim with tears, ſhe reſumed—'Well, I will indulge the pleaſing re'flection of embracing him, who was 'once the tendereſt, moſt kind, and 'obliging parent. As to my fortune, 'that is already ſecure by the marriage 'ſettlement: as the daughters were to 'be educated in my mother's principles, 'they were to poſſeſs her jointure; and, 'as I am the only daughter, it muſt all 'devolve to me, after my father's de'ceaſe. How happy will your friend'ſhip be to me! How richly ſhall I be 'repaid for the ſhort uneaſineſs you have 'given me, if, by your means, I can 'live with peace and pleaſure in my 'father's houſe!'

I now thought it high time to let her ſee that I had the ſame ſentiments as Lucius. I gave her very affectionate teſtimonies of my friendſhip, mingled with apologies for the ſeverity of my treatment. I inſiſted that ſhe ſhould make uſe of my cloaths, and dreſs more ſuitably to her birth and fortune. Lucius took this opportunity to ſend to the conſtable, and to deſire him to leave our old neighbour at liberty; and, after making him a ſmall preſent for his trouble, and the poor woman a conſiderable one, as a recompence for the uneaſineſs we had given her, they both ſeemed perfectly ſatisfied.

We preſently found that the ſervants, who had treated the young lady ſo ill, in a character more upon a level with theirs, had acted only from pride. They were all greatly offended at her not entering into their little cabals: they imagined that ſhe thought herſelf above them; and, as ſhe was preferred before them by me, they ſuſpected that I encouraged her ſelf-conceit, and, on this account, ſhe was both envied and hated; they therefore rejoiced to ſee her pulled down, and contributed all they could to preſs her ſtill lower. But, now ſhe was placed in a more exalted view, and no proper ſubject for their envy, there was a total change in their diſpoſitions: her company, whenever it had been granted them, was an honour that, in the reflection, tickled their vanity; ſhe had conferred a ſort of dignity on their ſtation, and was the kindeſt, moſt obliging lady; and ſo humble, that ſhe ſeemed rather to be born a ſervant like them, than a baronet's daughter. What fine things are birth and fortune! Happy acompliſhments! that can thus change our actions, even in thoſe minute circumſtances, that are altogether indifferent!—But let me ſtop the current of my reflections.

Twenty times, I believe, I have been obliged to break off, and as often have I reſumed my ſubject. I am now very much indiſpoſed; and ſhall therefore take this opportunity to conclude, and to aſſure your ladyſhip, that I am, and ever ſhall be, your faithful friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLII.

I Can now, Madam, give you the concluſion of Dorothea's ſtory. One morning, about a week after that day of uneaſineſs and unjuſt ſuſpicions, which I deſcribed in my laſt, the young lady came into my room, juſt at the time I was dreſſing, and inſiſted, with a good deal of gaiety, on performing her uſual taſk; which, however I refuſed: but ſhe ſtaid till the ſervant, who had taken her office, was gone; when ſitting down by me—'Dear Madam,' ſaid ſhe, 'did 'not you obſerve, that I avoided com'ing before Mr. Smith, the gentleman 'who was your couſin's companion in 'his travels? I really knew him at firſt 'ſight. My father has a ſeat in York'ſhire, not far diſtant from his father's. 'As the two old gentlemen are intimate 'friends, my brother and young Mr. 'Smith, whenever we choſe to reſide in 'that part of the country, were con'ſtant companions. His father fre'quently brought him to our houſe; ſo 'that, though his perſon is conſide'rably altered, it was impoſſible for 'me not to know him. All my fear 'was, leſt he ſhould diſcover me under 'the diſguiſe I had aſſumed. When 'he was here, I wiſhed him a hundred 'times out of the houſe; and, while

'you

'you were in the room with him, I was 'more than once put to a terrible 'ſtreight, by your ſending for me to 'bring in ſomething you wanted. I 'dreaded to ſee him, almoſt as much as 'I ſhould have done my father. And, 'indeed, it appeared to me the ſame 'thing; for, if he had diſcovered me, he 'would certainly have made no ſecret 'of the place and ſituation in which he 'found me. He was never here but I 'was in the greateſt uneaſineſs; and all 'the while he ſtaid, I felt the moſt ter-'rible palpitation of heart.'

'Now I recollect the circumſtance, 'Madam,' ſaid I, 'I could not help 'taking notice of the many excuſes you 'made to avoid coming into the room; 'and I thought there was ſome myſtery 'in your behaviour, which I could not 'comprehend. But I cannot help ob-'ſerving, that had I been ſo unfortu-'nate as to have thought of this yeſter-'day, I ſhould have conſtrued it great-'ly to your diſadvantage; and fooliſhly 'imagined, that it proceeded from a 'conſcious guilt, and, perhaps, a fear 'of being diſcovered by a perſon of 'the very family you had robbed of ſuch 'valuable effects. How blind are we! 'how eaſily hurried away by appear-'ances! and how careful ought we to 'be in forming a judgment of others! 'I am now glad, heartily glad, that I 'did not, by recollecting this circum-'ſtance, encreaſe my own uneaſineſs, 'and your ill treatment. I never was 'ſo thoroughly convinced, as I am at pre-'ſent, that even forgetfulneſs, amongſt 'our other imperfections, has it's ad-'vantages. May I learn from this to 'be ever cautious of cenſure, and afraid 'of judging the actions of another! 'But pray, Madam, proceed.'

'When Mr. Smith firſt came in with 'your couſin,' continued ſhe, 'I was 'ſo happy as not to be obſerved; there-'fore, the moment I ſaw him, and heard 'his voice, I hurried out of the room, 'and afterwards took all imaginable 'precaution to avoid his ſeeing me. The 'laſt time he was here, I heard him in 'the hall; he was taking his leave: you 'were with him, and called me—I 'trembled, but, ſoon recovering myſelf, 'ſlipped out of the back-door unnoticed; 'when having taken a turn or two in 'the garden, I reſolved to go into the 'wood, imagining that I might there, 'without danger of diſcovery, watch 'the moment of his departure; but the 'trees prevented me. I then attempted 'to croſs the avenue, at ſome diſtance 'from the houſe; and ſetting off very 'ſwiftly, ran againſt him with all my 'force. I ſtaggered backwards; and 'recovering myſelf juſt as he turned 'about, he looked full in my face. I 'was ſtruck with confuſion. "Miſs "Dorothea!" he cried; and, in a 'moment, as if recollecting himſelf, I 'heard him add, as I flew before him to 'the other ſide, "I muſt be deceived! "it can never be Dorothea!" I could 'hear no more. I fancied he followed 'me. Methought I heard the leaves 'ruſtle behind me. I did not ſtop till 'I was out of breath. My mind was 'agitated with my fears. The method 'I had taken to prevent a diſcovery, 'proved the very means of making my-'ſelf known. I ſtood ſtill—I liſtened. 'All was quiet. I reflected on what had 'paſſed; when changing my purpoſe, I 'reſolved to ſtep back, to call him aſide 'from your couſin, and, by an ingenu-'ous confeſſion of the whole affair, to 'prevail upon him to keep my retreat a 'ſecret from my father: but in this flut-'ter of ſpirits, ſo long was I in form-'ing my reſolution, and ſo many 'thoughts occurred both for and againſt 'my putting it in practice, that when 'I returned to the place, Mr. Smith 'and your couſin were almoſt out of 'ſight. Strange caprice of the mind! 'Notwithſtanding the affright and eager 'haſte with which I ran from him; 'ſlowly as I had moved to find him, 'and in ſpite of all the reluctance I felt 'in forcing myſelf to take this ſtep, I 'now looked upon his being gone as 'the greateſt misfortune. I burſt into 'tears, and——'

She was here interrupted by Lucius, who, coming into the room, told me that Mr. Smith was already returned, in company with an elderly gentleman, to pay us the viſit he had promiſed at parting; and deſiring that I would make haſte to receive them, retired.

Poor Dorothea, who had revived every uneaſy thought by the confidence ſhe had been placing in me while thus unburthening her mind, was now, to all appearance, in a very unhappy ſituation. Her eyes were moiſtened with tears; when Lucius appeared, and gave a ſhock to her mind, by letting her know that this formidable Mr. Smith was

returned, with a gentleman, whom ſhe immediately concluded to be her father, the perſon ſhe dreaded moſt to ſee. Lucius was no ſooner gone, than I beheld her ſunk back in her chair; her eyes were half-cloſed, and her countenance expreſſive of the moſt lively diſtreſs. Struck with ſurprize, I ran to her relief, and endeavoured to rouze her from this ſituation, by aſſuring her that, if ſhe pleaſed, ſhe ſhould not ſee Mr. Smith; but ſhe interrupted me, by crying—'O my 'father!—my father is in the houſe!' I tried every method to comfort her; and, at laſt, after giving her the ſtrongeſt aſſurances that I would uſe every argument to excuſe and juſtify her, ſhe began to moderate her uneaſineſs.

I then left her, full of the thoughts of vindicating her to the utmoſt of my power; when, as I went through the paſſage, I found that ſhe was not miſtaken in her conjectures; for, before I entered the room, I heard a voice cry—'Believe me, Sir, I know enough of 'them, and their prieſts too; and, damn 'her, if ſhe had as much regard for her 'own ſalvation as I have for her—' Here I opened the door, and, by the entrance, cut ſhort this fine expreſſion of his pious concern for the future welfare of his daughter. They roſe up, and, after the uſual compliments, reſumed their ſeats; when Mr. Smith, giving me much the ſame account of his meeting with Dorothea that ſhe herſelf had juſt before done, let us know that the improbability of it's being really that lady, in ſuch a dreſs, and ſo far from home, made him imagine that he muſt have been miſtaken; but the circumſtance was ſo remarkable, that, when he arrived at his father's, he could no more help mentioning it to him, than he could the pleaſure he had received from the converſation of a gentleman that I was very well acquainted with, and whom he was proud to call his friend. Lucius and I ſmiled at this compliment; but as neither of us interrupted him, he proceeded to inform us, that his father, after aſking him abundance of queſtions about her, to which he could give no ſatisfactory anſwer, at laſt told him, that ſhe had left her father's houſe, and had been miſſing near ſix months, and that he could do no leſs than communicate what he heard to the perſon moſt concerned to know the place of her retirement. A letter was accordingly ſent to Dorothea's father, who came to learn the particulars from the young gentleman himſelf; and he being deſirous to ſee Mr. Manly again, propoſed to conduct him to us. He concluded with letting us know, that he was very glad ſhe had been ſo wiſe as to chuſe ſo honourable a retreat.

While we were at breakfaſt, the ſtranger gave us an account of his marriage with Dorothea's mother; related many family broils that happened on the ſcore of religion and politicks; complained of the diſturbance he had met with from prieſts; that they had ſpoiled the beſt woman in the world, and robbed him of his daughter, by perſuading the ſaucy baggage to run away from him. From thence he digreſſed to popiſh tyranny, to maſſacres, and the tortures of inquiſitions; talked in favour of charity with the rage of a bigot; reproached the papiſts for the want of it; and, with all the intemperate heat and enthuſiaſm of party, ſwore that, if he had the power, he would not leave one of the bloody-minded monſters alive.

I was both ſurprized and ſhocked; and could not help replying with a ſneer, that he muſt certainly be a very great enemy to perſecution, ſince he ſhould take ſuch a generous method of ſhewing his love to mankind. To this he was going to reply, when Mr. Smith very reſpectfully put him in mind of his daughter, and ſeveral of his late wife's relations.

He immediately took the hint, and acknowledged that he had gone too far; ſaid, that he loved his daughter better than ſhe deſerved; and having given her abundance of foul names, and nearly as many tender ones, as his reſentment, or his affection, had the predominancy, ſtrenuouſly deſired to ſee the ſaucy, obſtinate vagabond.

I dont know, Madam, what idea you will form of the character of this gentleman; a man of diſſolute morals, ſtanding up for the cauſe of religion and truth. He ſwore and preached in a breath, and uttered his ſentiments with the poſitive aſſurance of a Jeſuit. His words were dictated by his paſſions, which hurried him away with too much violence to ſuffer him to be guided by the calmer dictates of reaſon. And, indeed, ſo difficult was it to judge of his real character, that it was ſome time before I knew whether I ought to rank him

him amongſt men of ſenſe, or perfect brutes; though I was rather inclined to place him amongſt the latter. But I was miſtaken; he was really poſſeſſed of many amiable qualities, joined to a tolerable ſhare of ſenſe, which lay in a manner dormant till the heat of his paſſion had ſubſided.

As ſoon as he was ſilent, I let him know that he ſhould ſpeedily ſee his daughter, but that I thought it neceſſary to prepare both him and her for the interview. I then, without ceremony, began her hiſtory from the time I firſt knew her; related every circumſtance of her behaviour that could contribute to ſet her character in a fair light; deſcribed the ſevere treatment ſhe had met with; and concluded with relating what had paſſed that morning, and the condition in which I had left her. I called her my friend; I reproached him for endeavouring to enſlave her conſcience; and mingled theſe reproaches with more bitter ones on myſelf, for my unjuſt ſuſpicions. When I began to ſpeak, I reſolved to plead her cauſe with all the art I was miſtreſs of; but, carried away by the importance of the occaſion, I ſoon loſt ſight of art. I ſpoke with the fervour of friendſhip; and while I was deſcribing the ſcene of her diſtreſs, which our raſh folly had involved her in, a guſh of involuntary tears, which ſeemed to flow from my repentance, and his inſenſibility, raiſed the father in him to ſuch a degree, as ſeemed to render it difficult for him to contain himſelf.

He could not now be kept from Dorothea. He confeſſed that he had been more to blame than he had ever imagined: he would ſee his poor girl immediately. He loved her better than ever he did. 'And did ſhe,' cried he, 'behave ſo prudently? Did ſhe ſay, 'ſhe felt ſuch tenderneſs for me? Did 'ſhe not rather tell you, I am a paſſionate old fool? Well, ſhe is a good 'girl, and I am glad I have found her. 'Let me ſee her, Madam, let me ſee her,' added he. 'I will ſee my poor daughter inſtantly.'

He was now in a ſituation that gave me the higheſt joy. I inſtantly aroſe, and ran up ſtairs. She was ſitting in a melancholy, thoughtful poſture; and, as ſoon as I entered the room, gave me a look that at once expreſſed her fear and impatience; but her countenance began to brighten into chearfulneſs, even before I had time to ſpeak. She ran towards me, to embrace me; while I had only time to cry—'Victory! my dear 'Dorothea, victory! I have conquered.' —'I ſee it, Madam,' ſaid ſhe; 'but how? 'by what means?'—'I have now no 'time to anſwer you,' cried I; 'your 'father waits for you; he is ſubdued, 'he is ſoftened, he longs to ſee you.' Here I took hold of her hand and led her down, her colour changing at every ſtep. When we entered the room, her father ran to her, claſped her in his arms, and laviſhed upon her the moſt endearing expreſſions of kindneſs. It was purely the joy of a father who had recovered a dearly beloved child, after it had been, by ſome accident, loſt, without the leaſt mixture of reproach or bitterneſs. Dorothea was ſilent for ſome time, and only expreſſed her joy by her tears; but at laſt, preſſing his hand—'Do you, do you, dear Sir, forgive me?' cried ſhe. He gave her the warmeſt aſſurances that he did, embraced her again, took his chair, and made her ſit by him.

It is eaſy to conceive, Madam, that Lucius and I muſt have great delight in obſerving the happineſs to which we had ſo greatly contributed. For my part, I received many engaging compliments from both father and daughter, with which Lucius ſeemed more pleaſed than if they had been paid to himſelf.

Mr. Smith, I had obſerved, was extremely attentive to the praiſes I had beſtowed on Dorothea; he was greatly affected with her ſtory; and, for the reſt of the day, ſeemed to bear an uncommon ſhare in the happy reconciliation. He obſerved all her motions, and methought there was ſomething in his air that expreſſed as much of the lover as the friend. For her part, ſhe viewed him without terror; he was no longer the formidable man that had filled her with ſuch dreadful apprehenſions; and, ſo far from having any inclination to run away, ſhe converſed with him with all the freedom of an old acquaintance.

I am ſtrangely addicted to the writing of long letters, which, I am afraid, tire you; and, for the future, I believe, I muſt be leſs communicative, in order to be leſs troubleſome. Be pleaſed to preſent

ſent my compliments to his lordſhip; and be aſſured that, whether my letters are long or ſhort, I ſhall always be, as I am at preſent, your ſincere and moſt affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLIII.

DEAR MADAM,

YOUR rallying ſo agreeably an aſſertion in one of my former letters, that rural ſcenes are the moſt unfruitful of adventures, has ſo much the air of a compliment, that, however undeſerved, I think I ought to thank you for it. You may conſider Dorothea's ſtory in what light you pleaſe; the intereſt you are pleaſed to take in her good or bad fortune, ought to induce me to ſend you the particulars which are ſtill behind. Without any farther preamble, therefore, I proceed.

Believe me, Madam, there is as great a difference between Dorothea's father, when angry, and when pleaſed, as between any two perſons upon earth; you would not even take him to be the ſame man; were it poſſible for you to have been an hour or two in his company, after his reconciliation, even you muſt have thought my laſt letter a vile ſlander on his character. So much do theſe furious paſſions diſtort the mind!

The reſt of the day was ſpent very agreeably; and, at the ſame time, nothing was omitted that could contribute to confirm the happineſs of the amiable Dorothea. Lucius artfully introduced the ſubject of religious liberty, which he proved to be the birthright of every reaſonable being. He made uſe of the moſt convincing arguments. He quoted the incomparable Mr. Locke's piece* on this ſubject; a work which, he aſſured us, was of more value than a Peruvian mine. A high price, I muſt confeſs. Mr. Smith joined with Lucius to anſwer ſome objections. He then repreſented perſecution as arraigning the infinite ſagacity of the ſovereign Creator of all things, who, to make room for heaven-born Charity, had wiſely given ſuch a variety of taſtes, degrees of capacity and underſtanding, to the mind of man, from whence reſult the love of truth, and the teſt of every kind and benevolent affection. Uniformity of ſentiment, Madam, is, I find, in his opinion, no more deſirable, than the dull uniform proſpect of a ſmooth and wide-ſtretched plain; or rather a large tract of barren ſand, where no interrupting ſhades, none of the blooming beauties that ariſe from the varied tints of trees, of ſhrubs, of turfs, of flowers, diverſify the enlivening proſpect; whilſt Charity, amidſt the greateſt variety of tempers, educations, and capacities, like the invigorating power of the ſun, preſents the moſt lovely ſcene, and gives life, and ſpirit, and beauty, to all around: mutual complacency, and benevolence, breathe an eternal ſpring; and at once bloſſom, bear fruit, and yield a friendly ſhade.

Methinks I hear him ſtill, and ſtill ſee the blaze of humanity darting from his eyes; when he added—'With this 'view do I look upon my native coun-'try, the ſeat of Liberty, and her ſiſter's 'earthly throne. In this view let us 'regard the whole world. The honeſt 'Turk ſhall be my friend; the ſober, 'faithful Chineſe, that lays the divine 'Confucius to his heart; and the In-'dian of either world, bleſt with ſim-'ple innocence and native truth, ſhall 'be my brothers. Wherever I find a 'man who loves his God, and loves 'mankind, I will hug him to my 'breaſt.'

Here Lucius pauſed a while; and then ſmiling, aſked Dorothea, what ſhe thought of this rant? 'Am I not, Ma-'dam,' ſaid he, 'in the right? is not 'this a very deſirable diſpoſition of 'mind?' She gave her approbation; on which he replied—'Then what muſt 'you think of Popery, with her ſmooth 'uniformity of barrens ſands, which, 'blown with the baleful wind of perſe-'cution, ariſe in curling torrents, and 'ſpread ruin and deſtruction over all 'the wide creation? Nor can the ſtorm 'be laid till ſhowers of blood, pouring 'from honeſt hearts, beat down the duſt, 'and, for a time, huſh the wild uproar 'to a calm.'

'Forgive me, Madam,' added Lucius, ſeeing her bite her lips, 'I do but juſt 'touch on a ſubject, which, if dreſſed in 'plainer

* Letter on Toleration.

plainer language, would, I am ſure, wound your tender heart. Perſecution, whether in Papiſt or Proteſtant, is a tempeſt raiſed by the breath of hell. And, believe me, if there, can be a Chriſtian without humanity and charity, a Devil may be a Saint.'

Mr. Smith, who appeared not a little delighted with Lucius's flights, and who, doubtleſs, comprehended his motive for introducing this ſubject, took care to keep it up for ſome time longer. He entered upon the cauſe of liberty as connected with a free enquiry, and ſhewed the neceſſity of making uſe of reaſon, in order to diſcover truth from error. He was ſeconded by Dorothea's father; and Lucius cloſed their obſervations, by giving a ſlight glance at the principal ſyſtems of religion throughout the world. The various pretences to infallibility were conſidered and expoſed in all; the folly of ſuffering the conſcience to be enſlaved by the Derviſe, or the Chriſtian prieſt, proved equally ridiculous; and the impoſſibility of diſcovering truth from error, where no enquiry was made, as great in the zealot of Rome and London as in that of Turkey or Siam.

Theſe ſubjects, Madam, were managed with ſuch delicacy, that it was impoſſible for even Dorothea to be offended. She ſeemed to liſten with pleaſure; and, when it was done, ſaid, with a ſmile, that they had inſpired her with a love of truth, and that, though ſhe was very ſure ſhe ſhould be a Catholick as long as ſhe lived, yet, for the future, ſhe would be one upon rational principles, and boldly venture to ſtudy the truth of her religion, and to read even thoſe pieces with care that had been wrote againſt it.

Mr. Smith received this declaration with as great an appearance of pleaſure as even her father himſelf: and nothing was omitted that could confirm this agreeable diſpoſition.

You perceive, I dare ſay, the tedious dulneſs into which I am ſinking. My ſpirits, indeed, begin to flag. I will, therefore, haſten to a concluſion, leſt a more intereſting ſubject ſhould intervene, and demand my pen.

The reſt of our converſation was little more than chit-chat. Dorothea had many queſtions to aſk concerning her friends in the country, ſome of whom were dead, and ſome were married; and theſe, though they furniſhed not the leaſt kind of amuſement to us, as their very names were unknown, engaged almoſt her whole attention for the little time ſhe had to ſtay.

The next morning I had the mortification of taking leave of Dorothea, whoſe father would not be prevailed upon to ſtay any longer. We parted with many reciprocal expreſſions of affection. But, to the no ſmall ſurprize of Lucius, Mr. Smith, who, at their firſt meeting, of his own accord had propoſed to ſtay with us at leaſt a week, reſolved to accompany them; nor could we, by all the arguments in our power, induce him to keep his word.

I have only one word more to add; yeſterday it was a month ſince they left us; and we have this minute received a letter from Mr. Smith, in which he informs us, that what ſeverity and reſtraint could not do, mildneſs and freedom have accompliſhed; that the amiable Dorothea is already a Proteſtant, and that he hopes for the happineſs of ſpeedily poſſeſſing the lovely convert.

It is with great difficulty that I have been able to write thus far; I am really very ill, but as much as ever your ladyſhip's affectionate

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLIV.

I Have now, Madam, the pleaſure of informing you, that we have another perſon added to the family; you, I am ſure, will be glad to find that I am able to tell you ſo. I am now a mother in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, and was happily brought to bed three weeks ago.

O my friend! how delightfully does the mind glow with gratitude, thus riſing from the ſtruggle of convulſive pangs, from the languor of expiring life! The dear helpleſs infant, too, the ſubject of our future care, and future joy! With what new, what tender ſenſations, do we view the little gift of Nature entruſted to our protection! Methought a beam of heavenly comfort ſhot through my ſoul! Eaſe, joy—tranſporting joy, and mingled fondneſs: all delight, extaſy, and love! My heart overflowed at once with gratitude, and the ſofteſt maternal affection.

Before the firſt week was over, I began to be alarmed, leſt my fondneſs for my boy ſhould ſuperſede my affection

fection for my girl. I told my fears to Marilla, who was conſtantly with me, and deſired that I might have her brought to me every day: and while I endeavour to divide my heart between them both, the pretty creature, by twenty winning ways, ſeems to ſtrive to hold faſt my affections. My fears, Madam, were groundleſs: I muſt love her; and I am really glad that my affections ſo eaſily correſpond with my duty.

After this rambling, incoherent letter, you will not wonder if I tell you that, though I am as well as can be expected, my head is ſtill very weak: indeed my eyes fail me, and I am forced to conclude. May every bleſſing attend you. I am, yours, &c.

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLV.

DEAR MADAM,

IT was with extreme concern that I read your laſt letter. Indeed, I ſincerely ſympathize in your affliction. I don't wonder that the ſudden death of a perſon, ſo dear to you as his lordſhip was, ſhould damp all your ſpirits, and make the moſt ſprightly pen that ever wrote deal in the moſt ſolemn and awful truths. Sickneſs, pain, and death, have indeed a natural tendency to check the ſallies of a gay diſpoſition; to call back the thoughts from the pleaſurable amuſements, the vain purſuits of life; and, for a while, to confine them to the more important review of our own conduct: they are bitter medicines, but ſuch as have the moſt healing virtues—virtues adapted to ſtrengthen, improve, and exalt the mind. To be forced to take a final leave of that form we love; to bid a long adieu to the ſpirit with whom we have daily converſed with pleaſing intercourſe—is very hard; the ſenſible heart-ſtrings muſt feel the dreadful rent, the diſtreſsful mind is torn with anguiſh. But, O Madam! why do you ſay *for ever?* The ſeparation is not ſurely for ever. Soon you will ſee him in a more lovely form. Soon the well known mind, cloathed with heavenly radiance, will congratulate your arrival on the bliſsful ſhore. Why do you complain that 'he 'is now a ſenſeleſs lump of clay?' Miſtake not the object of your affection, he is all life and active ſpirit. Thoſe ſhining virtues that, while you enumerate them, ſeem to add to your grief, and which, you tell me, will ever renew your ſorrow, ought to be the pleaſing ſource of joy. Though you lament his loſs, lament not his exaltation, nor derive your tears from the very ſubject of his felicity. He is in the land of virtue; it's native clime. How often do you repeat the words, *poor, dear man!* and dwell on ſounds expreſſive only of pity! Pity, Madam, is not for angels. It is you alone who are the ſufferer. O, could you but be ſenſible of his happineſs, extaſy and tranſporting rapture would dry up your tears! Would you wiſh him back? Would you have him, to pleaſe you, leave the ſeats of bliſs, and exchange the regions of unfading felicity, for a world of ſin, tranſient happineſs, intermingled with pain and trouble? No, this you cannot wiſh. 'But he was 'happy too ſoon.' Too ſoon his pain, and ſorrow, and dangerous ſtate of trial, were at an end. You would have prolonged his miſery. If this be love, what is hatred?

O my dear friend! recollect yourſelf, and, filled with a generous and refined devotion, repoſe your mind on God. Endeavour to loſe the ſenſe of your own private apparent loſs in the delightful contemplation of his tranſcendent goodneſs. Repoſe yourſelf on his ſovereign will, whoſe determinations are always ſafeſt, wiſeſt, beſt. Let every dewy tear be wiped away by the happineſs of him you love. Love him ſtill, but be diſintereſted in your affection; imitate and rejoice in his virtues; and, while you dwell with pleaſure on his felicity, anticipate your own.

'Death's but a path that muſt be trod,
'If man would ever paſs to God;
'A port of calms, a ſtate of eaſe,
'From the rough rage of ſwelling ſeas.
'Nor can the parted body know,
'Nor wants the fond theſe forms of woe:
'As men who long in priſon dwell,
'With lamps that glitter round the cell,
'Whene'er their ſuff'ring years are run,
'Spring forth to greet the glitt'ring ſun:
'Such joys, though far tranſcending ſenſe,
'Have pious ſouls at parting hence.
'On earth, and in the body plac'd,
'A few and evil years they waſte:
'But when their chains are caſt aſide,
'See the gay ſcene unfolding wide,
'Clap the glad wing, and tow'r away,
'And mingle with the blaze of day.'

PARNELL.

With

With the moſt tender ſympathy and commiſeration, believe me to be, dear Madam, your ladyſhip's moſt affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLVI.

DEAR MADAM,

HOW great is the power of friendſhip! With one daſh of your pen you involve me in grief, and oblige me, by an irreſiſtible force, to taſte the bitterneſs of your ſorrow: with the next, you inſpire me with ten thouſand ſenſations, all of them agreeable, all delightful. Nothing in the world, Madam, could give Lucius and me greater pleaſure, than your propoſal to honour us with your company—Honour do I ſay? my friendſhip is offended at the compliment, and would let you know that vanity has no ſhare in our ſatisfaction. We heartily embrace your offer; and nothing ſhall be wanting, on our part, to make your reſidence with us perfectly happy.

But have you, indeed, the reſolution to leave the delights of the gay circle, the glittering ſplendor of conſpicuous greatneſs? Can you really have the courage to bid adieu to pomp, and all the parade of oſtentation and vanity, the dear delight of a thouſand fine ladies, and, in their opinion, the ſummit of all human happineſs? Can you forſake the reſidence of polite flattery and compliment, to dwell with ſimple truth and ſincere friendſhip? and the important hurry of attending on the modes and forms of greatneſs, for perfect liberty, and a life gliding on in the clear ſmooth ſtream of rural peace?

O Madam! how many delightful ideas ruſh upon my mind, upon the proſpect of ſuch an addition to our little friendly circle? Your enlivening wit, tempered with ſober contemplation, will heighten all the other bleſſings I enjoy. Ever ſince I have received your letter—the moſt welcome letter I ever received—my imagination has been filled with the moſt pleaſing images, nor can I divert it from the flattering ſubject. I have already rambled with you, in idea, along my moſt favourite walks, and have ſallied out with you to taſte the fragrant breath of the morning.—But whither does my roving fancy carry me? I beg pardon, Madam, for thus amuſing you with idle viſions; but friendſhip would have it ſo, and I only obeyed it's dictates.

We had yeſterday a piece of news that ſtruck us with an uncommon ſurprize. My father, Mr. Manly I mean, received a letter from Holland, which informed him, that his brother, who had parted from him in diſguſt about twenty years ago, and who had never ſeen him ſince, was dead, and had left him, in money and effects, to the value of forty thouſand pounds.

Lucius and I happened to be preſent at the receipt of this letter, which immediately opened a very affecting ſcene. It was read by my father, with a compoſure of countenance which would not even ſuffer us to gueſs at the contents. He had no ſooner run it over, than giving Sophronia a moſt affectionate look—'My dear,' ſaid he, 'you have 'been a witneſs of my extravagance 'and folly; and it is now in my power 'to let you ſee that my repentance is 'ſincere, and that no change of fortune 'can make me relapſe into the wild 'purſuits of vice. It is only ſince my 'diſtreſſes, that I have known what 'it is to live: ſince that time, my happineſs has been centered in you and 'my family; to make you happy forms 'the moſt pleaſing part of my life, 'and it will ever do ſo. This alone 'deſerves the name of life. O my dear, 'your virtues have fixed me yours for 'ever. I here find that my brother is 'dead. I thought he had been long 'dead. He died a batchelor, and has 'left me all his effects. Had this happened ſome years ago, I had been ſtill 'what I now bluſh to think that I ever 'was.' Here the tears ſtood in his eyes. He was ſtanding, and my mother was ſeated before him. His looks and expreſſions, joined to her ſurprize, had hitherto kept her motionleſs; but ſhe was now unable to contain herſelf any longer; ſhe ſuddenly aroſe, and threw her arms about his neck. He embraced her; he preſſed her to his heart, crying—'No, my Sophronia, my vices ſhall 'never more diſturb the quiet of this 'dear breaſt.' She begged him not to mention the name of vice: told him, that his affection was all that was neceſſary to make her happy; and that was wealth enough, and of more importance to her than all the riches in the world; and that with ſuch a huſband,

and ſuch children, ſhe had, for a good while paſt, thought herſelf the happieſt woman in England.

At the word *children*, ſhe caſt an affectionate look at Lucius, Marilla, and me; at leaſt, my heart was willing to rank me among the number of thoſe from whoſe tenderneſs ſhe derived ſo much of her ſatisfaction. But the moment ſhe obſerved me, ſhe withdrew her arms, and ſeeming to ſtruggle with her tenderneſs, ſtepped back, and again ſeated herſelf in her chair.

My father, at the ſame time, turned to Lucius and Marilla; called them his dear, his virtuous children; and Lucius, in particular, his benefactor and his friend; and added ſomething about gratitude, which Lucius could not ſuffer. 'Dear Sir,' ſaid he, 'forbear theſe 'moving expreſſions of your goodneſs. 'For Heaven's ſake, talk not of gratitude to me. What muſt I be, if I 'could hear, with patience, ſuch language from a father—a tender and 'affectionate father! I know you love 'me; then why do you make uſe of 'words that ſhock my love to you, and 'which both nature and duty forbid my 'hearing?'

My father made no reply, but ſaluted Marilla and me; and, after giving me ſome particular expreſſions of affection, we all took our ſeats; when, giving the letter to Lucius, he deſired him to read it, which he had no ſooner done, than the converſation turned upon the particulars.

One who reflects on the misfortunes of this family, would be apt to conceive, that ſuch a ſudden and unexpected change in their ſituation muſt have occaſioned the moſt extravagant tranſports of joy; and if he had only a ſuperficial knowledge of human nature, that my father's behaviour was extremely unnatural. Marilla's eyes, indeed, ſparkled with a peculiar pleaſure: and I could not help expreſſing a lively ſatisfaction, from conſidering that Lucius would now gain from his father an equivalent to what he had acquired from mine: and thus, being placed more upon a level as to circumſtances, approve my father's conduct to the moſt avaricious of his friends. The day was ſpent with rather more gravity than uſual. But the want of mirth was ſupplied by the ſweet complacency of friendly hearts, exulting with exquiſite joy in the happineſs of each other; while the compoſure and equanimity of mind which appeared in thoſe moſt concerned, ſtill heightened the opinion I had conceived of their characters.

I ought, Madam, to have told you, that the occaſion of our viſit at my father's was to ſee our daughter; the dear ſweet creature is very much indiſpoſed, and the doctor informs us that her diſorder will end in the ſmall-pox.

Let me ſpeedily know how long it will be before I ſhall have the pleaſure of telling you, in perſon, how much I am your affectionate friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLVII.

DEAR MADAM,

HOW are the ſweets of life intermingled with bitterneſs! My poor dear girl has now left the world, and gone to the regions of ſpotleſs innocence and peace. I had almoſt ſaid, that innocence itſelf is dead, and fled to it's native ſkies—my little ſon occurs to my thoughts, and I retract the expreſſion. That opening mind, which every day received new ideas, now feels the full blaze of truth, and perhaps would look with contempt on the boaſted knowledge of mortals. Her pretty laugh, the innocent liſp of her half-formed ſentences, when, with little ſportive arts, ſhe ſtrove to court my ſmiles, are ever loſt to me.

Oh, why did I let her take ſuch hold of my heart! How vain were my fears, leſt I ſhould not love her as I ought! But yet, methinks, had I loved her leſs—I cannot think of that neither—I would not love her leſs. But ſhe is happy, pretty lovely cherub! ſhe is happy; for ever free from vice, from care, and pain, and ſorrow.

She was ſeized with the ſmall-pox, as the phyſician had foretold; a painful and a loathſome diſeaſe! My affection, and the ſenſe of my duty, compelled me to ſee her. I ſaw her every day. But, O Madam! how was the ſenſe of her loſs ſwallowed up by my ſolicitude for my ſon, who was ſeized with the ſame diſtemper about twenty-four hours before ſhe died! O my heart! what did I feel! I blamed my raſhneſs—and, as if my duty and affection had been a crime, reproached myſelf for what deſerved no reproach.

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Plate IV.

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reproach. With a noble fortitude, Lucius endeavoured to chear my ſpirits, and to raiſe my hopes. He talked of reſignation, and of Providence; and felt himſelf the reſignation he would inſpire. At firſt the taſk was hard, but ſoon the healing balm ran through my ſoul—he ended, and all within was peace. Every favourable ſymptom ſoon appeared, and with them ſoothing Hope. In ſhort, he grew paſt danger—he recovered, and my grief was loſt in joy.

In my preſent ſituation, while I conſider together the loſs of a child, that I loved almoſt as much as if nature had bid me love; and the recovery of another, whom maternal affection had entwined about my heart; my mind enjoys all the united force of ſerenity, reſignation, and thankfulneſs. I conſider my dear infant as left below for future uſefulneſs, to be the delight of his family, and a bleſſing to mankind; ſpared, that he may riſe to high attainments in virtue, to perpetuate his name, and the benevolence that glows in his father's breaſt, when his father, and your Felicia, ſhall be no more; and, in ſhort, as ſpared to give him room to obtain thoſe more glorious, more exquiſite, more refined delights, in the world of bliſs, to which the negative goodneſs of helpleſs infancy can hardly be ſuppoſed to be entitled.

You ſee, Madam, that, in this plain, I have left titles, grandeur, and ſhining poſts of honour, to be ſtruggled for by the buſy world. May virtue be the glory of my ſon; I am anxious for no other dignities. May the doing good be his employment, his poſt of honour. O! call not this humility; it is a pride of the nobleſt kind. Theſe are the flattering hopes that ſwell a mother's breaſt; and may they be the preſage of bleſſings, ſtretched out to the fartheſt limits of time; while a MANLY, with all the virtues of my Lucius, ſhall, in ſucceſſion, ariſe in every age, with calm benevolence to meditate on happineſs, and diffuſe it's influence all around! O, how my heart beats with the great idea! —My child is this moment brought to me: with what elevated tenderneſs do I look upon him! I give him the breaſt he longs for, I preſs him to my boſom, and write again.

May theſe lips, that now draw thy ſuſtenance from me, be ever the fountain of truth, ever pure in their expreſſions, and ſtrangers to the wanton's kiſs! May the joys of innocence, and as much peace as mortals can know, always dwell within this little heart! And when this heart ſhall melt with ſoftneſs for ſome lovely maid, may ſhe return with purity thy flame, and render all thy happineſs compleat!—Bleſs me! what nonſenſe I am writing, with my child in my lap! But I attempt in vain to loſe ſight of the ſubject, and I hope the candour of friendſhip will bear with the workings of maternal affection.

Lucius is now engaged in an employment that you will doubtleſs imagine to be extremely viſionary. He is ſtudying the hiſtory of man from his moſt early infancy. And as his ſon is much too young to expreſs his ideas in any other way but by the traces of his countenance, and by inarticulate ſounds, he examines theſe with a particular attention, in order to diſcover the ſtrength of his perceptions, and the progreſs of his ideas. This employment is extremely ſuitable to his philoſophick turn of mind; though I muſt confeſs, that it ſometimes makes me laugh to ſee the aſſiduous care with which he endeavours to trace the impreſſions made on the little features of a face which nature has ſcarcely finiſhed, but which, however, ſufficiently deſcribe wonder, pleaſure, and pain. From this ſtudy Lucius propoſes to derive the greateſt advantages: he will have an early knowledge of a heart, in the happineſs of which he is moſt nearly concerned; and by this diſcover the degrees and bent of the paſſions, the ſtrength of the moral taſte; and determine, with the greateſt evidence, this important truth, whether there are any ſeeds of vice implanted in the heart;* a doctrine contended for by many learned and good men, with as much heat and zeal as if vice was the higheſt glory and perfection of human nature.

So aſſiduous is he already in this taſk, that he has even interfered in my choice of a nurſery-maid, and prevailed upon me to make this office worth the attendance of a

* The reader may find a conciſe and excellent hiſtory of the underſtanding, and the paſſions, in the Preceptor, Vol. II, Book i. Sect. 1. A performance that the editor fears to commend, leſt he ſhould injure it by his praiſe.

perſon of ſolidity and underſtanding; one of a tolerable education, and of a ſober, reputable family. And this was the more neceſſary, as ſhe is obliged to deviate from the common practice, and to regulate her actions by his, or my directions, in the minuteſt particulars. He is ſuch a friend to nature, that he will not ſuffer her to be conſtrained; the body muſt not be bound up with rollers, nor ſmothered with the heat of flannel; be uſed with a miſtaken delicacy, and too cloſely preſerved from the inclemency of the weather. But I muſt not enter into particulars: only this I ſhall ſay, that he is ſo unfaſhionably polite, as to conſider the mother's ſuckling her own child as one of the indiſpenſable obligations of nature; as a duty that can never be transferred to another, except in a caſe of the utmoſt neceſſity: and, indeed, had I been as averſe to conviction upon this head as the gay fine lady at court, I muſt have either renounced all pretenſions to reaſon, or ſuffered myſelf to own the force of his arguments.

But his firſt ſtudy is to cultivate the underſtanding; or, as Mr. Thompſon expreſſes it—

'To teach the young idea how to ſhoot,'

The nobleſt employment that can exerciſe the attention of a reaſonable being! an employment that, however, muſt at preſent be confined within a narrow compaſs; ſince, for ſome time, it can only conſiſt in preſerving the confuſed undiſtinguiſhing capacity of infancy from receiving bad impreſſions: and here the care ought, in his opinion, to begin with life itſelf. The tender brain muſt not be diſturbed; nor the mind, in it's firſt exertions, be ſtarted by loud or ſudden noiſes. This care increaſes in proportion as the mind enlarges; and as it ſtill continues capable of receiving impreſſions from objects of terror, theſe muſt ſtill be induſtriouſly excluded. About a month ago, when we were at my father's, Lucius was very much ruffled at finding his daughter afraid of the dark. He was certain that—pardon the impropriety of the expreſſion—an object that had ſo frequently occurred, and which muſt have been familiar to the child, could never excite ſuch fear, had not it's mind been taught to connect with it ſome unnatural and terrifying ideas. This was, in the eſteem of Lucius, an affair of great importance: he ſearched into the cauſe, and found that one of the ſervants had frightened the pretty creature, with threats of Tom Dark, and other words which to children are of direful ſound. Would you believe it, Madam? for this cauſe alone, he prevailed on his mother to turn away the poor girl! I confeſs that I was ſo ſtruck with this, that I could not forbear telling him, that I thought he behaved in a very arbitrary and cruel manner: when, in juſtification of his conduct, he ran to his ſiſter's cloſet, fetched a volume of the Spectator, and read, before all the ſervants, a performance on that very ſubject, that ſtruck me dumb. However, he had no objection to my providing for the girl till I could get her another place: and, in return for this civility, ſhe has had the ingratitude, and the impudence, to raiſe a report, that Lucius had this child by me before our marriage. But, in the country, no vice is indulged with ſuch a keen reliſh as ſlander.

Lucius has been very careful in his remarks on the ſeveral ways by which the mind of infancy is induſtriouſly impreſſed with the moſt hateful extremes of all the paſſions*, ſelfiſhneſs, pride, revenge, inſolence, avarice, cruelty, and, in ſhort, all the vices which ſpring up in after life; when the mind is ruined without deſign, and the heart in ſport taught to be vicious before the tongue can ſpeak, and all the tender ſenſibilities of humanity are utterly perverted. Againſt theſe methods of corruption he propoſes to be ever on his guard, becauſe traces ſo early made are ſeldom perfectly eraſed: and, indeed, this kind of treatment ought more to be avoided, as it is infinitely more fatal in its conſequences than all the diſtempers that can affect the bodily health.

This, Madam, though of prodigious importance, is only a negative kind of education. But, to implant a love of truth, and a thirſt after knowledge; to teach the young underſtanding to exert its powers; to refine, to elevate, to enlarge the ideas; and to lead the eager, admiring youth, by the ſweet allure-

* See ſome hints of theſe methods of corruption in the note to page 13. Vol. I. which the reader may eaſily enlarge from his own obſervations on the conduct of parents, nurſes, &c.

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ments of pleaſure, to the higheſt attainments in virtue, to rectitude of manners, to rejoice early in his immortality, and to anticipate the divine delights of heaven by a diſintereſted love for mankind; a love widely extended, and ever prompting to acts of beneficence and diffuſive goodneſs: this is an employment as noble as the attainment is godlike, and to this does Lucius already raiſe his ideas; this he conſiders as the previous ſtudy, the earlieſt exerciſe of childhood. He propoſes to dreſs up morality, and the ſublimeſt truths of natural religion, in the eaſy * language of infancy; and by degrees to pour in more and more light, as the underſtanding enlarges, and the mind grows more and more capacious; and by encouraging the reſtleſs curioſity natural to children, give inceſſant employment for the rational faculties. He conſiders Engliſh as the moſt important of all the languages to an Engliſhman. His child, he ſays, ſhall ſtudy all it's beauties, learn to read with a grace, and, if poſſible, to write with elegance; to adapt his language to his ſentiments, and to expreſs his thoughts with eaſe and fluency; to form his ſtyle, and to ſettle his judgment, by a careful attention to the works of the moſt celebrated Engliſh authors; be taught to point out their beauties, to comment on the noble ſentiment, to reliſh, even to rapture, the tender beauties of Spencer, the lightning of Shakeſpeare, and the ſhining glory of Milton.

The languages he conſiders only as the key to further knowledge, and not knowledge itſelf: theſe, even in the midſt of ſtudy, he would render ſubſervient to his grand deſign, and make the dry taſk of words delightful by a continual acquiſition of agreeable ſenſations and improved ideas. He would pleaſe himſelf with hearing the voice of unprejudiced nature, a mind unbiaſſed with the forms of thinking which prevail amongſt mankind, decide in what conſiſts the merit of ſuch and ſuch an action; he would hear the tongue of innocence explain the glory or infamy of an Alexander, a Trajan, or a Domitian; he would cheriſh and fix the juſt ſentiment, would improve the random thought, and, where the judgment failed, would ſet it right. How delightful muſt this exerciſe of the faculties be to a child! To be led by it's own reflections to a conſtant ſeries of new ideas—how manly, how rational the entertainment! It muſt inſpire the mind with a continual ſpring of ſelf-complacency, and make the moſt rugged ſteps to learning pleaſant. Lucius would endeavour to obtain the aſſiſtance of ſome decayed gentleman adorned at once with piety, good-nature, learning, a knowledge of mankind, and a free and genteel addreſs. A perſon of this character muſt be the tutor of his ſon, and ſhare with him in the important taſk; he muſt live in the family, and in all reſpects be treated like a gentleman and a friend. Learning will thus be made a high entertainment, eſpecially as it will be varied, at proper intervals, by the hiſtory and conſtitution of our own country. Under their conduct, the aſpiring youth muſt improve in knowledge and underſtanding, muſt be introduced early into life, emboldened, encouraged to ſpeak, and to bear a part in the moſt polite converſation, at an age when learning generally conſiſts in mere ſounds, and pleaſure in vanity and folly: and, while a youth, we ſhall have the rational delight of ſeeing our child a man, a friend, a companion.

I am prepared to hear you laugh at me, and expreſs your ſurprize that, notwithſtanding the great uncertainty of life, I can thus launch into futurity, talk of embelliſhing a mind yet incapable of fixed ideas; and from an infant of two months old, by the ſtrength of imagination, draw a line parallel to that of time, and reckon our duration by that of the ſun and moon. But blame me as much as you pleaſe, ſome of the ſweeteſt comforts of life depend on expectation; and was it not for hope, which recreates the mind with diſtant proſpects of pleaſure, our very enjoyments would be apt to flatten, and life itſelf grow dull and inſipid. But it is not only a remedy for the vapours, and the moſt effec-

* Something of this kind is already attempted in the Chriſtmas Box, two ſmall volumes printed for the uſe of children.

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tual cure for the reſtleſs mind; it is a cordial comfort to the diſtreſſed, and joy to the miſerable.

Education, Madam, is a daily topick of diſcourſe, a ſubject to us the moſt intereſting; can my friend then think it impertinent? But if it appear ſo now, as you will ſoon be a mother, you will ſoon be convinced of it's importance. Lucius is now ſo fond of it, that he talks of little elſe; he is continually quoting to me the beſt authors on the ſubject, and from theſe I have collected my ideas, which, as they are ever preſent to my mind, I ſhould have found ſome difficulty to ſuppreſs.

Haſten, dear Madam, by your preſence, the happineſs of your affectionate

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLVIII.

HOW tedious is Time, when his wings are loaded with expectation! My laſt, I imagined, would have concluded our epiſtolary correſpondence, at leaſt for ſome years. I propoſed to throw aſide my pen, to bid an eternal adieu to tedious narrations, high flights, rapturous nonſenſe, and long letters; but the very morning in which we were preparing to ſet out to meet you, with an alacrity inſpired by our joy, to be diſappointed with a fortnight's delay, what a damp did it give to my ſpirits! I could hardly meet with a greater diſappointment. Let me have no more of your letters, Madam, I beſeech you. A fortnight! fifteen days!—indeed it is quite intolerable.

We have had a very diverting account, from my ſiſter Marilla, of a moſt ſingular courtſhip. My wiſe couſin, it ſeems, has had the misfortune to fall deſperately in love with that engaging lady. The mighty wound was given at our houſe; but he had not there the power to make it known: he waited for a more favourable opportunity, which he had the penetration to foreſee might ſoon arrive; and, therefore, recommending himſelf as the beſt coachman in the univerſe, he earneſtly begged that ſhe would do him the honour to ſuffer him to drive her home in her chaiſe. She readily conſented to the propoſal; and he, perhaps, drawing a favourable concluſion from her eaſy compliance, was all life and thankfulneſs.

They accordingly mounted, and had drove but a ſmall diſtance from the houſe, when his natural ſelf-conceit proving too ſtrong for his baſhfulneſs, he could not reſiſt the preſent moment, and accordingly began with praiſing himſelf; a method of courtſhip, though a little uncommon, not altogether irrational: for as a perſon, deſirous to exchange a ſorry piece of goods for a better, ſhould prudently confine all his oratory to one ſide; ſo he imagined that he ought to give her a high opinion of his own merit, and not, by encreaſing her vanity by a miſapplied flattery, make the diſproportion greater than it really was. In conſequence of this refined ſophiſtry, and with the aſſiſtance of the phraſe, *though I ſay it that ſhould not ſay it*, which he introduced at proper intervals to ſhew his modeſty, he began a long detail of his uſeful travels; and very gallantly concluded with telling her, that though he had converſed with, and even had the honour to enjoy the good graces of the fineſt ladies in France and Italy, he was never made a captive to the little divinity till now.

Marilla, who had been held a good while in ſuſpenſe, could not help being ſurprized at this declaration, which, however, ſhe was ſo cruel as to turn into ridicule. The gaiety of her reply diſconcerted him for ſome moments; but, recovering himſelf, he anſwered very gravely, that he loved, and would for ever love her; and that, as it was not in her power to prevent it, ſhe ought to think of ſome way of making him happy, ſince that would be the ready way to make herſelf ſo. And that ſhe could never have a better huſband, ſince he would do all in his power to ſerve her.

His thoughts were ſo taken up with this anſwer, that, quite forgetful of his office, he drove againſt a tree, which unluckily grew by the ſide of the road; when, the wheel breaking, poor Marilla was thrown in the dirt; while the ſquire, giving a ſpring, flounced into an adjacent ditch, which happened to be full of water. Marilla, who had not received the leaſt hurt, was preſently on her feet, extending her hand to the relief of the poor dripping ſquire, which, by his touch, was as defiled as his own. She found him ſhaking his ears, and, with

with a moſt diſtreſsful countenance, attempting to clamber up the bank. His hat and wig floated on the ſtream, his face was as much beſmeared as his cloaths, and his whole figure ſuch as would have excited laughter in any other perſon but herſelf; but to her it was only an object of pity.

The ſervants, who were riding at ſome diſtance, no ſooner beheld his miſerable plight, than they made up to his aſſiſtance, and preſently ſet him on dry land. Having recovered his hat and wig, he began, with great confuſion, to make his apology, which ſhe interrupted, by deſiring him only to mind his own health, to take one of the horſes, and to ride with all the haſte he could to her father's, which was then not half a mile diſtant; and, ordering her ſervants to bring home the chaiſe, promiſed to follow him on foot. My couſin readily obeyed; and Marilla, who walks much better than moſt ladies about St. James's, was not very long after him. She entered the houſe unperceived, and having waſhed herſelf, and changed her cloaths, went down to the parlour, where ſhe found her lover ſitting with my father by a good fire: he had been accommodated with a large dram, as a preſervative from the effects of the cold; and care being taken to ſee him cleaned, and with freſh apparel put in a more comfortable plight, he was now in a proper ſituation to receive her.

Was it poſſible for my poor couſin to begin his amour under more unlucky auſpices! To be thus ſouſed, and, falling from his aſpiring hope, to become an object worthy of deriſion, rather than pity! What a painful humiliation! But, though I lament his fate, he had ſtill comforts, which the diffident and tender lover could never, on the like occaſion, have experienced: a hidden reſerve of vanity now ſtood his friend, and enabled him to bear up manfully under his diſgrace.

Marilla had no ſooner opened the door, than my couſin—who, having recollected, as he himſelf has ſince confeſſed, the obliging manner with which ſhe had endeavoured to help him out of the ditch, the little care ſhe took of herſelf, and her great concern for him, had not the leaſt doubt but that ſhe was perfectly in love with him—flew to her with open arms, gave her a rude kiſs, and, ſeizing hold of her hand, pulled her towards my father, who, as well as Marilla, was all amazement. My couſin deſired his fair-one not to be ſo coy; adding, that as he loved her, and ſhe loved him, their parents conſent was all that was neceſſary to their marriage; and then addreſſing himſelf to my father, cried, with the ſame vivacity—'Egad, Sir, you know my fortune, 'lookee, and ſo forth; and I hope you 'have no objection to my having the 'honour of being *votre petit-fils*.'—'The honour of being my grandſon!' cried my father, laughing; 'how is that? 'One language at a time, Sir, I be-'ſeech you. I don't underſtand——' He was here interrupted by Marilla, who, recovering the uſe of her tongue, cried out, 'What do you mean, Sir? Let go 'my hand—I cannot comprehend what 'you would be at. I love you!—'You!—What inſolence!' And now, exerting all her ſtrength, ſhe gained her liberty, and inſtantly flung out of the room.

As ſoon as ſhe was gone, my father told him, very frankly, that he could not poſſibly account for this rude behaviour; and that, when he came to his houſe in ſuch a deplorable condition, he did not think it was with deſign to affront his daughter; which, whatever were his motives, he would not ſuffer. My couſin aſſured him, with many oaths, that he was in earneſt, and that he only intended to aſk his conſent to marry his daughter, for that he had convincing proofs that ſhe loved him. My father anſwered, that he could never believe it; but that, if it was true, he had no objection to his family and fortune; and therefore inſiſted upon knowing what reaſon he had to believe that ſhe had an affection for him. My couſin replied, with a confident laugh, that he knew well enough how to judge; and that a lady might tell ſhe loved without making uſe of words; that if my father knew all, he would be of his mind; and that, after what had paſſed, ſhe ought not to have given herſelf ſuch airs; but it was all one, he could be as indifferent as her. Marilla now returned, and interrupted a converſation that was growing very warm on my father's ſide.

As ſhe entered the room, her young ſpark, reſolving to humble her, put on a look of inſenſibility, and walked by her with a careleſs, affected, and ſelf-ſatisfied air; but ſeeming not to obſerve

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it, ſhe ſeated herſelf cloſe by her father, and in a calm and complaiſant manner deſired him to ſit down. He obeyed with a ſmile, when the old gentleman repeated his command to explain, before his daughter, what he meant by his inſinuations. But he did not chuſe to hear him; and leaning his elbow on his knee, and ſtaring up in Marilla's face, he aſked her, which of thoſe pretty hands it was that he had the misfortune to daub, when ſhe was ſo kind as to ſtrive to help him out of the ditch. He then propoſed, that ſhe ſhould hold it out to him, that he might kiſs it; called her a dear, ſweet, fond fool; ſwore ſhe could not help it; ſhe was frightened for him, and off her guard, or elſe it would have been imprudent to yield ſo ſoon; that ſome men would like her the worſe for it; but that he thought it a certain ſign that ſhe would make a good wife, ſince, though he was in fault, ſhe took more care of him than herſelf.

Marilla, gueſſing the grounds of his behaviour, heard this arrogant ſpeech without once attempting to interrupt him: but he had no ſooner concluded, than giving him a contemptuous look—'I am ſorry, Sir,' ſaid ſhe, 'that you 'ſhould put ſuch a falſe conſtruction 'upon my humanity. I thought your 'life, or, at leaſt, your health, in danger; I followed the firſt dictates of 'pity; and, inſtead of diverting myſelf with your misfortunes, endeavoured all I was able to remove them; and 'hurried you hither, where I knew you 'could be ſupplied with neceſſaries till 'you received them from home. But 'ſuch is the return that the leaſt act of 'kindneſs meets with from narrow 'and ſelfiſh minds. Yet, I aſſure you, 'Sir, I am not ſorry for the little I 'have done with an intent to ſerve you: 'it ſpreads no bluſh on my cheek, it 'gives no uneaſineſs to my heart. 'There is not a creature living that I 'would not have ſerved with equal tenderneſs. But how could your vanity 'ſuggeſt ſuch a motive for my endeavouring, without any hurt to myſelf, 'to ſerve the brother of Amelia, and a 'near relation to my ſiſter Felicia? 'What a wretched heart muſt you have, 'while you can form no idea of generoſity, humanity, or compaſſion, without the allay of a particular affection! 'I wiſh you well, I confeſs; and more 'ſo, as the happineſs of a worthy family is, in ſome degree, connected 'with yours: but, at the ſame time, I 'muſt be ſo plain as to tell you, that I 'neither do, nor ever can, love you. 'Your vices are an inſurmountable obſtacle. Your travels, which might 'have been of ſervice to a man of ſenſe 'and virtue, only ſerve to diſgrace you, 'and diſplay your ignorance and folly. 'Forgive me, Sir, I mean not to reflect 'on any involuntary imperfection; were 'you as kind to yourſelf as nature has 'been, you would be much more tolerable. But your debauchery, your 'boaſted lewdneſs, and that impious 'cuſtom of ſwearing, the unmannerly 'vice of a bully, muſt for ever exclude 'you from the affection of any woman 'who has ſenſe, virtue, or true delicacy. Indeed, Sir, if you would be 'happy here, you muſt endeavour, at 'leaſt, to copy your couſin Manly, 'and, like him, aſpire to be happy 'hereafter. He, I dare ſay, enjoys 'more true delight from the reflections 'of his own mind, in one day, than 'you, with your boaſted ſwing of pleaſure, in the compaſs of a year.'—'Ay, 'than in the compaſs of an eternity,' cried my father, with an eagerneſs which could ariſe from nothing but a conviction founded on experience: 'I know 'it, Sir; feel it every day.'

I believe, Madam, you will think Marilla's reproof much kinder than my couſin's inſolence deſerved: ſhe had, indeed, a favourable opportunity to humble his pride, and, by opening his eyes to his own follies, to lay an obligation on his whole family: to this point, then, ſhe generouſly directed her views. Indeed, had ſhe not treated him with ſuch forcible ſeverity, all ſhe could ſay would have been uſeleſs. His mind is ſo extremely callous, that fine raillery, though ever ſo ſharp, would not have hurt him.

The youth, ſtruck with the eaſe of a conqueſt which he fancied he had too ſoon obtained, began already to think of my ſiſter with indifference. His elbow was ſtill on his knee, and his eyes, with the utmoſt confidence, fixed on hers: but ſhe had hardly uttered three or four ſentences, when ſurprize, vexation, and diſappointment, appeared by turns on the ſtiff muſcles of his unmeaning face, that was not at all formed to expreſs his ideas; and yet theſe were wrought up in ſo ſtrong a manner, as to

give deformity to every feature: and at laſt, as if blaſted by the indignant look of Virtue, he ſighed, hung down his head, and ſat abaſhed and confounded.

The bare idea of loſing for ever, what he, juſt before, was ready to deſpiſe, made him almoſt diſtracted. His humility was now no leſs extravagant than his vanity before; it ſunk even into meanneſs, and the moſt abject ſubmiſſions: he roſe, walked about the room, ſat down again, wept, began to ſwear, and ſtopped ſhort before the execration was finiſhed; and, at laſt, after the ſolemneſt proteſtations, that he never loved her a hundredth part ſo well as he did that moment, told her that he wiſhed from the bottom of his heart that ſhe had not a farthing in the world, or (to uſe his own elegant phraſe) a ſmock to her back, that he might let her ſee his ſincerity.

Marilla ſays, that it was impoſſible for her to avoid ſmiling, and inſtantly thanking him for his good wiſhes. As to my father, he burſt into laughter: 'A fine 'ſpeech truly!' ſaid he; 'a moſt gene-'rous lover! So you would have her be 'a beggar, that you might force her to 'be miſerable your own way? We are 'all greatly obliged to you.' My couſin endeavoured to vindicate himſelf; and after ſaying and unſaying, affirming and retracting, at laſt, with much heſitation and ſtammering, he made ſhift to declare, that he only meant to ſay, that he ſhould be glad of an opportunity to convince her how very much he loved her.

But, Madam, I try your patience too much, as well as tire myſelf, in thus dwelling on circumſtances that you may think beneath your notice. I ſhall only ſay, therefore, that by the time his ſervant had returned with linen and other cloaths from my aunt's, he began to be more reconciled to his fate; and, after having dreſſed himſelf afreſh, took his leave with a tolerable grace. Not all the reaſoning in the world could have made him ſo ſenſible of his folly, as this diſappointment has done. Love ſeems to have refined his mind, and to have given a large ſcope to his underſtanding. He ſhuns his old companions; and, for the preſent at leaſt, has thrown off his favourite vices. It has taught him the uſe of reflection; and, in ſhort, if this reformation continues, we may have the happineſs to ſee him have a juſt [illegible] to that reſpect and complacency which is ever due to the character of an honeſt man: a title the moſt ſignificant, as it carries in itſelf the idea of intrinſick worth and excellence.

After all, a union between my couſin and Marilla would be extremely agreeable to me, could I be but once convinced of the ſincerity of his reformation; ſince it would not only give a cloſer cement to the two families, but might happily confirm that virtue which has yet ſcarcely taken root. But why do I mention this? It is a thing altogether impracticable; ſhe will not ſuffer me to ſpeak of it; his want of ſenſe is alone, in her eſteem, an unſurmountable obſtacle. The deficiency, ſhe ſays, is on the wrong ſide; and ſhe could never have a ſincere eſteem for a huſband who was acknowledged by all her acquaintance to be greatly her inferior. And, indeed, I muſt confeſs that I think her in the right.

Lucius and I propoſe to meet you at Leiceſter. I ſincerely wiſh you a ſafe and agreeable journey; and am, as you will ever find me when our friendſhip will be ſupported by a nearer intercourſe, your ladyſhip's faithful friend,

FELICIA MANLY.

LETTER XLIX.

FROM CHARLOTTE TO LADY HARRIOT ***.

DEAR MADAM,

DID not I tell you, that I would not write till I could ſend you word how I liked my ſituation? Why then ſhould you complain that I have not kept my word? I am in a new world; and three months is ſurely time little enough to form a judgment, where every thing I ſee, and every thing I hear, is as great a novelty as if I had been tranſported to ſome unknown region. Conceive, if you can, how ſurprizing it muſt be to me, who never beheld any thing but the ſplendors, or, as I now chuſe to call them, the tedious ceremonies of a court, to meet with artleſs ſimplicity and plain-dreſſed truth, inſtead of polite flattery and high-ſtrained compliment; and, in the room of every gaudy folly, to behold pure nature and white-robed innocence and felicity ariſing [illegible] conformity to their dictates.

tates. But I believe, Madam, a particular account of my reception and manner of life will not be diſagreeable. To begin, then.

As I intended to ſurprize them, by arriving an hour or two ſooner than they expected, I was not above five miles from the end of my journey, when I was met by Mr. Manly and my friend. We had like to have paſſed by each other; but Felicia happily obſerving the coronets on my chariot, called me by my name. I gave them a look; their door flew open; and both Lucius and ſhe were at mine before any of our fellows had time to diſmount. I was ſurprized, I confeſs, at this piece of indecorum. 'O 'the dear hoyden!' cried I to myſelf, and the ſervants ſtared as if they were aſhamed of their inſignificancy. The eyes of both my friends ſparkled with pleaſure; their rapidity and eagerneſs ſoothed my friendſhip, while my heart fluttered, and ſaid—'To follow nature is 'the height of good-breeding.' One of my ſervants preſently opened the door of the chariot, when I could do no leſs than ſtep out to embrace them. But I ſhall take no notice of the endearing compliments that paſſed between us. Felicia's cheeks were moiſtened with a tender teſtimony of her joy. I was compelled, by friendſhip, to leave my woman to ride alone, and to give them my company in their own coach, in which, in a kind of triumph, they carried me to the end of our journey.

We ſoon arrived at the houſe, a large plain edifice, ſituated in the midſt of an earthly paradiſe, where I found an entertainment rather hoſpitable and friendly than profuſe and magnificent. I was welcomed with the moſt obliging teſtimonies of joy; and as they concluded that I muſt be weary with my journey, I was early conducted to my apartment, the moſt ſumptuous of any in the whole building; and though there is nothing like grandeur in the furniture, there is a neatneſs and elegance that at firſt engaged my attention: every thing is, like the owner's mind, plain and beautiful. Such was the idea Felicia had given of me to her few ſelect friends, that, from the firſt moment, wherever I appeared I ſeemed to inſpire joy; their hearts were as open as their houſes to receive me; and all of them actually ſtrive who moſt ſhall contribute to make my reſidence in this delightful place as agreeable as poſſible. But, after all, you can't imagine, Madam, what a ruſtick creature this Felicia is grown; why, ſhe is ſuch a walker, I can't keep pace with her half the length of a ſmall field. I laugh at her activity, and mimick her country ſtride; while ſhe, with the greateſt good-humour, ridicules my mincing ſtep, and endeavours to put me out of conceit with ſome little peculiarities, which ſhe calls affectation. Mr. Manly has, indeed, every perfection that my lovely friend has attributed to him: believe me, he has nothing of the ſwain but ſimplicity, and an artleſs heart; nothing of the courtier, but the unaffected eaſe and freedom of his behaviour; and ſuch an eſteem I have already entertained for him, that I had rather hear him talk than liſten to the compliments of the fineſt beau in Chriſtendom. Nay, more, I love him; love him as I ſhould my guardian angel, were I permitted to ſee his perſon, and hear his heavenly admonitions. If it ſhould pleaſe the Director of all events to ſuffer me to be ſafely delivered of a boy, where ſhall I find a tutor like him? I would not, for the world, deny him the happineſs of being brought up with his ſon. Should I live to ſee the image of my dear deceaſed lord growing up under his care, what a ſweet addition would it give to my reveries! With what pleaſing ſympathy ſhould Felicia and I behold the two prattling infants daddling before us through the garden or the fields; while we, with hearts filled to the brim with maternal love and ſocial friendſhip, walk ſlowly after, talking of refined delights, and raiſing our ſouls on the wings of heavenly affection and gratitude! The little cherubim, when lying on Felicia's lap, puts me in mind of the Venus and infant Cupid I have ſo often admired in my uncle's cloſet. I need not tell you that he is a lovely boy, when I make uſe of this compariſon; a compariſon that would wrong him, if I did not add, that it only holds good while he ſleeps; for, when awake, his bright blue eyes deſtroy the reſemblance.

The firſt viſit I paid was to Marilla, who is the ſame engaging creature that Felicia has always deſcribed her: ſhe has a good deal of learning, a great deal of fine ſenſe, and a vaſt deal of that tender humanity, that unlimited goodneſs of heart, which, uncircumſcribed by the ties of blood or the diſtinctions

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of religion, graſps at the happineſs of every human creature. In this ſhe reſembles Lucius, to whom ſhe is nearer allied by a kindred ſoul than by all the ties of nature. He conſiders man as man, and himſelf as a citizen of the world; and they both regard the whole univerſe, however varied by the complexion of different regions, however diſtinguiſhed by religions, cuſtoms, and manners, as having a reciprocal claim to benevolence, and the kindeſt acts of humanity. In this viſit to Mr. Manly's, I was entertained with the ſame affection as if I too had been married into the family: Marilla received me with open arms; and the good lady, her mamma, expreſſed almoſt as much tenderneſs for me as for Felicia, or her own daughter; while my friend, ſmiling at their careſſes, ſeemed to ſet a higher value on them than on thoſe beſtowed on herſelf. What a difference is there, Madam, between this frank behaviour, this unreſerved freedom of mind, and all the low acts of diſguiſe, the empty formalities, the modes and forms of greatneſs! The openneſs of their countenances made it impoſſible for me to be under the leaſt reſtraint. In an hour's time I was as free and intimate with every one of them as Felicia herſelf; I told them I knew all their affairs, and enquired of Marilla, whether ſhe was yet inclined to admit the addreſſes of Felicia's couſin? She reddened a little; but immediately replied, that was it poſſible for her to be in love with a vicious man, let his perſon and behaviour be ever ſo engaging, ſhe would never admit of his addreſſes; ſince this would be to hazard both preſent and eternal happineſs: that, in this caſe, it would be her duty to do violence to her heart, and, by a glorious effort, endeavour to conquer herſelf; how then could ſhe ever think of being ſo nearly united to a man whom, though ſhe would not deſpiſe, ſhe could never love!

'But,' ſaid Mr. Manly with a ſmile, 'my daughter has another motive to refuſe him, which, notwithſtanding the extraordinary frankneſs of her temper, ſhe has had the art to conceal. A young clergyman, nearly related to Mr. Stevens, is lately returned into this part of the country, where he has obtained a ſmall living; but, though his circumſtances are but very indifferent, he has every other qualification that can recommend him to my daughter. He was laſt week accidentally in her company; and I am informed that ſhe has made a conqueſt which ſhe cannot but approve. I had this information from Felicia's couſin, who makes a great merit of the diſcovery; and ſays, that though the clergyman deſpairs of ever obtaining her, and has declared that he ſhall never have the preſumption to attempt it, yet, in his opinion, I ought to watch her cloſe, leſt ſhe ſhould be prevailed upon to throw herſelf away.'

During this ſpeech, Marilla had a conſtraint and aukwardneſs in her air, which ſhewed her at a loſs how to behave; but ſhe was ſoon relieved by Felicia, who, after expreſſing ſome indignation againſt her couſin, aſked if the gentleman was not educated at Cambridge. Mr. Manly anſwered, that he heard ſo. On which ſhe told him, that ſhe had once the honour of his company with Mr. Stevens, Lucius, her aunt, and Amelia, in a viſit they paid at my *Lord M****'s; that ſhe was greatly pleaſed with his converſation, and believed him to be a gentleman of uncommon merit. It was eaſy to ſee that Marilla did not hear this encomium with indifference, though ſhe had the preſence of mind inſtantly to change the ſubject.

Marilla, who had yet, as ſhe told us afterwards, no more than a high opinion of the merit of this reverend gentleman, an eſteem which rather encreaſed than diſturbed the tranquillity of her mind, had ſoon a very favourable opportunity to ſee if it was worthily placed. She had no difficulties to encounter with; her father, and every one of the family, were devoted to her happineſs. Mr. Manly, diſguſted with the follies of life, rejoiced at the proſpect of diſpoſing of his daughter to a perſon of intrinſick worth; he only wanted to know if his information was well founded, and this he eaſily accompliſhed. He invited Mr. Stevens and the clergyman to dine with him; and bloſting out the name of the young eſquire, ſhewed them the letter as a mean attempt to injure them in his eſteem. The modeſt clergyman, ſtruck with confuſion, trem-

* See Letter VIII.

bled, and confeſſed the truth; at the ſame time aſſuring him, with many proteſtations, that though it was true he loved Marilla, he never had the preſumption to aſpire to the leaſt hope; and that, whatever had been the conſequence, he had reſolved never to mention it to her. But Mr. Manly interrupted him, by letting him know that he was not diſpleaſed; that he had a very great eſteem for him; and though his daughter's fortune would be now very conſiderable, the diſproportion could not be great, ſince he did not doubt, if virtue, piety, and good ſenſe, would do, but that in time he would wear the mitre; and that, if he could gain his daughter's affection, he would be no obſtacle to their union.

You muſt not expect, Madam, that I ſhould here deſcribe his rapture, or tell the wiſe and ſilly things he ſaid and did. He was in a moment raiſed from deſpair almoſt to the poſſeſſion of his higheſt wiſhes: if, then, he did not behave at this inſtant like a madman, or a fool, I ſhould have no opinion either of his love or his wiſdom. However, he was introduced to Marilla, who received him with the deference due to his merit: he ſaw her every day; and ſhe every day becoming more ſenſible of his value, in about ſix weeks time they were married.

The young ſquire, though he had no great reaſon to hope, could not bear to loſe the poſſibility of obtaining her, much leſs to ſee her in the poſſeſſion of another; and, therefore, as if his reformation had been only a pretence, threw it aſide, as being now of no ſervice to him. He curſed her and himſelf; ſtormed like a madman; ſwore to abandon himſelf to every vice; went out, and got ſo drunk, that he was obliged to be carried home; and the next day was ſeized with a fever, from which he recovered with difficulty. The idea of the immediate approach of death filled his mind with horrors not to be expreſſed. Dreadful, indeed, were the conflicts of his deſpair; but theſe were at laſt removed by prayer and penitential tears; and, indeed, this ſickneſs ſeems to have produced a real reformation. He is but juſt recovered, and may now live, and yet be no diſgrace to his family; he may have a juſt claim to the complacency of his friends; and may riſe as high as his capacity will ſuffer him, to the degree of an honeſt huſband, perhaps a plodding country ſquire, and a well-meaning juſtice of the quorum.

My whole attention is to contribute, by an eaſy chearfulneſs and good-humour, to the ſatisfaction of a narrow circle of friends, and to furniſh freſh matter for their amuſement. It is their taſk to improve, mine only to divert. Marilla, who has not yet retired to her new habitation, graces our little ſociety more frequently than before her marriage; and with her comes the agreeable youth who has the honour of her neareſt friendſhip. I want words to expreſs the height of their felicity: he, as well as Lucius and Felicia, is conſidered by Mr. and Mrs. Manly as the pride of their little family, as their happineſs and glory. I hardly ever knew a man of finer ſenſe or more generous ſentiments; I could not have imagined that a perſon could be found ſo nearly reſembling Lucius.

It is now, Madam, that I begin to live, to know myſelf, and to know the human mind, which in this place appears ſtripped of every diſguiſe. True felicity dwells here; here is peace and joy. I taſte the delight of the moſt ſprightly and improving converſation; I read, I give a full ſcope to my reflections; and theſe employments alternately fill up my time. I ſometimes venture to walk out alone, and, wrapt in ſober contemplation, trace the hidden receſſes of my own heart.

Would you believe it? I am grown a very enthuſiaſt. I fall in raptures at the lovely face of nature. And were you to ſee me, when I walk in the garden, or in the adjacent fields; or when, to enlarge the landſcape, I view from the turret the wide proſpect ſtretching in a long level till it mingles with the clouds; were you, in theſe moments, to hear my rhapſodies, and be a witneſs of my extravagances; even you, with all your partiality for me, would be tempted to think me mad. But, perhaps, you are not far from thinking me ſo at preſent: however, it is beſt to conclude while I have room to aſſure you, that I have the honour to be your ladyſhip's moſt ſincere friend,

CHARLOTTE.

THE END.